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ROSE CITY
REDNECK

ROSE CITY REDNECK

My Poetic Journey Through Life

Mark Stracener

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ROSE CITY REDNECK



My Poetic Journey Through Life

“Everyone must leave something behind when he dies, my grandfather said. A child or a book or a painting or a house or a wall built or a pair of shoes made. Or a garden planted. Something your hand touched some way so your soul has somewhere to go when you die, and when people look at that tree or that flower you planted, you’re there. It doesn’t matter what you do, he said, so long as you change something from the way it was before you touched it into something that’s like you after you take your hands away. The difference between the man who just cuts lawns and a real gardener is in the touching, he said. The lawn-cutter might just as well not have been there at all; the gardener will be there a lifetime.”

—Ray Bradbury

If you're reading these words, you have decided to give me a chance to get inside your head. Since you have made the very wise decision to pick up my book, maybe you would like to know a little more about who I am and where these ideas for prose come from. My life is really nothing out of the ordinary for someone raised in the south during the tumultuous sixties.

My deepest roots came from hard working grandparents who sharecropped and picked cotton and grew vegetable gardens to just get by. The depression era brought with it very creative ways to survive and somehow raise a family. Their lives were full of family values and faith. Wasting anything during that time was taboo. Newspapers and magazines became wallpaper and canning vegetables out of the garden was a necessity for just living day to day.

My parents believed in real discipline and making bad decisions were not tolerated. I fully respected my grandparents and parents because their lives were never easy. Having a sense of humor dealing with tough issues was, to me, genius. My parents left the farm and moved to a small town called Rose City. A lot of my friends parents were refugees from rural Arkansas towns looking for a better and easier way of life for their families.

I learned to play football and baseball in the sandlot fields in town with some great friends in elementary school. I played on a flag football team called, "The Lynch Drive Vampires." I always thought it was a great name for a sports team.

A lot of our area was close to the swamps. We trapped, fished, hunted and frog gigged. It was a wonderful childhood. Our little town was often maligned for being poor but I didn't know until someone told me in my teen years. They called us Rose City

Rednecks. We eventually came to be proud of that moniker and a good friend of mine came up with a slogan that I loved. He said, “I’ll be Rose City Red until I’m Rose City dead!”

The Poems in this book cover many areas of my life. Some of them are written from raw emotion as I dealt with the circumstances. Writing was my therapy and some poems included tears on the page as they created themselves. There were tears of terrible sadness and tears of extreme joy.

I have arranged the poems in somewhat of a chronological order but you can read them anyway you wish.

My life has been blessed. Every person I have known has shaped me in one way or another. I hope you enjoy this walk with me. Try not to point and laugh. It’s been fun!

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FRIENDSHIP

**'Oil and incense bring joy to the heart, and
the sweetness of a friend is counsel to the soul**
Proverbs 27:9

There are many versions of friendship. There are childhood friends, adult friends, lifelong friendships and even accidental friends. During childhood there's always that one friend that you love like a brother. The one you do everything with. You experience lots of sleepovers and birthdays and just growing up and sharing life together. Real friendship is precious indeed. These are the relationships that mold us and make us who we are. We don't realize the impact they really have on our lives. Friendship is Golden! Accidental friendships are those that come unexpectedly.

I had the honor of volunteering along with my wife in Hospice Care in Louisiana. The poem, 'Willie and The Black Stallion,' is about one of these accidental but wonderful friendships during that time. What a Blessing he was to me!

WILLIE AND THE BLACK STALLION



Willie loved living
and he loved horses too
His heroes were guys like
Roy Rogers and Lash Larue
When I would come over to visit
TV was in black and white
The old shows would keep his attention
His heroes always won the fight
Willie also had cancer
The pain took his will
His best moments where times
When he was quiet and still
He called me late one night
He was scared and all alone
I could hear he was breathless
on my end of the phone
He told me about a Black Stallion
that was nipping at his neck
He was running as fast as he could
But it felt like he had big weights on his legs
He said, "I know he's close
I can feel his hot breath
and I know if he catches me now
it's gonna be my death"
I came over to comfort him that night

His sick frame was so weak
He was such a sweet and gentle man
I always felt so blessed to meet
Willies' dreams continued
The Stallion came closer each night
I always hated that the thing he loved the most
was giving him such a fright
It wasn't long after his call
the Stallion no longer ran alone
You see the horse wasn't coming to hurt Willie
It was coming to take him home.

MY FRIEND



It was a day like any other
I awoke with the days work in my head
Getting dressed I turned to leave
Wishing I was still sleeping comfortably in my bed

At least it was Friday
The last day of my workweek
I walked into my office
Cleared my desk and took my seat

Drinking my first morning cup of coffee
Sitting all alone
I heard a sound and then looked down
At a message on my phone

I could see every word on the message
But the meaning just wouldn't come through
This couldn't be reality
It just could not be true

Every thought inside my head
Took me back to days gone by
A childhood full of fun and friends
And I began to cry

There's no way it can be this way
It just can't happen like this
We were supposed to get together soon

To laugh and talk and reminisce

We were going to pull out those old pictures
Make fun of our clothes and hair
Just how am I supposed to do that
If you're not even here

You only get one childhood and one best friend
To share life and plans and dreams
The years go past and life just happens
So very fast it seems

I'll never get that chance here on Earth
To reconnect with him again
But I'll always cherish the memories
I have of my dear friend

Don't take friendship for granted
It's special in every way
Keep in touch
No matter what
You'll be glad you did one day

HOME



She was proud of her young man
It was Brads' first sleepover with his friend
She had heard them making plans
So she packed his favorite backpack to send

He told her they were gonna play games
And stay up as long as they could
Eat lots of ice cream and candy
Probably much more than they should

His friend River met him at the front door
It was gonna be a great night
Brad stopped himself and turned around
Before his mom got out of sight

"Wait mom!" He yelled
Then ran up to give her a big squeeze
"Thanks for letting me come tonight.
"I'll be a big boy and say thank you and please."

Then he released her and ran inside
With a wink from Rivers' mom
They shut the door and she couldn't help
But give out a whimpered sob.

They had such a good time
And did almost everything they said
Until it got dark outside

And got close to time for bed

First Brad could feel it in his stomach
Then the small tears welled up in his eyes
The told Rivers' mom
Which to her was no surprise

He said, "I want to go home!
My belly don't feel just right
I'm not real sure what's wrong with me.
Maybe I'm allergic to your house at night."

The two mothers had already talked
They expected that this might be the case
She told him, "I'll take you home Brad."
A smile lit up across his face.

Years later River reminded Brad of that night
While they talked to the recruiter that day
Together they were joining the Army
To see parts of the world so far away

The training was very difficult
It pushed them to their limits every day
Somehow in that time they became men
Always having each other to lean on day to day

After a couple of months
They shipped out together
To a war they had to win
It was on that ship going over
That their real worries and fears would begin

Home

They saw horrible things
They never thought they'd see
It was fight after fight after fight
But it always seemed more intense and scary
Sitting in a foxhole late at night

One night they heard yelling in another language
Then explosions that rocked the ground
Screams from some of their friends
Were the worst of all the sounds

They fought for their lives with all they had
Beating them back to finally win the fight
In all the smoke and noise
Brad searched everywhere for River that night

Yelling out his name in all the confusion
Brad finally heard him crying out loud
Finding him in a bombed out crater
He reached in to pull him out

Yelling for the medics to help him
He did everything he could do
His dear friend grabbed his arm.
He said, "Brad, now I know the truth."

"I wanna go home!
I wanna sleep in my bed
I wanna wake up in my house
And not hear these explosions in my head."

Medics rushed to help him
They took him away in the dark night

For the first time since he arrived, he was alone
He could feel the chills of fright

But they both did return home
After the war came to an end
They lived their lives like brothers
Always the best of friends

They loved each others families
Their grandkids and their wives
And they were both together
As old men at the end of their lives

After many treatments and lots of pain
River called in all his clan
He told them I know you want me here
But that's never been my plan

Reaching out to hold their hands
He whispered in his weakened voice
"I want to go home now.
I've finally made my choice."

Brad knew what those words meant
As he looked deep into his eyes
The two mens eyes connected
His words were no surprise

Finding his voice Brad told him
"Yes, go home my dear friend
It's where you're meant to be
And I know soon I'll be joining you
Soon we'll both be free

But until that time just know
I'll see that everything is right
Your family will have me to call
No matter how dark the night.

GRANDPARENTS

“Nobody can do for little children what grandparents do. Grandparents sort of sprinkle stardust over the lives of little children”-Alex Haley

I was so blessed to have known my grandparents and felt their love for me. I loved them back dearly. On my fathers side I saw hard working people, who at one time were sharecroppers working the land and picking cotton. They were such humorous people who used laughter to keep their lives moving forward.

On my mothers side I had a Church of God preacher and excellent carpenter with a wife who loved him. He would preach and she would lead the music with her red and white electric guitar. She was almost deaf and the amplifier allowed her to hear the music. If, perchance, a string would happen to break, she'd just turn it over and beat time on the back. What a Legacy they left for me. A real Treasure!

THE BALLAD OF ANCEL AND SADIE



Ancel was a young, hard working man
Sadie was a beautiful indian maid
They fell in love down by the river
Never knowing what path their lives would take

Sadie kept and served her loving husband
Ancels heart was true, he loved his wife
The twists and turns they walked together
Hanging on to Love, hanging on to life

He was a carpenter, a very good one
He built his house, nail, board by board
The two discovered something was missing
That's when they learned to serve the Lord

Ancel became a preacher in the pulpit
Sadie learned to play a red and white guitar
He would preach to whoever would listen
And she would play with all her heart

The two were blessed with two loving daughters
They raised them with love and hugs so tight
Their loved stayed true, hands clasped together

Hardly ever straying from each others side

Sadie was there at Ancels bedside
When the Lord above called Ancel home
She knew her service here on earth was over
And in six months, she no longer was alone

Sadie keeps and serves her loving husband
Now Ancels heart is true, he loves his wife
No twists, no turns, they are together

Hanging on to Love in Eternal Life

THE HUMMINGBIRD



I always admired and loved it
When I would visit my grandmas house
But it was always just out of reach
When I stretched my little arms out

So high on the shelf
So safe and so secure
There was something about it
So fragile, so pure

It was A small glass Hummingbird
With wings that stretched so far out
And a beak so long and fragile
How it never got broken,
I don't know how

I asked my grandma
If I could hold it one day
She looked up and stared at it
And softly began to say

This precious little Hummingbird
Was a gift from my dad
I can't quite say how old it is
But when I got it, I was amazed and so glad

I got it on my wedding day
In a wooden box that he made

He took it out and handed it to me
And said, you won't break it, don't be afraid

Then he told me this small glass bird
Was for my husband and I
It's a symbol of your love for each other
He said through a tear and a sigh

This little one survived
Through many years of hard life
We watched over it and adored it
Through happy times and through real strife

We treated it like our love for each other
With such care and respect
Through children and wars
struggles, sickness and death

We were determined to keep it safe
And we both thought it through
When we two have gone home
We wanted to give it to you

She carefully handed me the Hummingbird
I held it tight in my hands
Grandma cupped her feeble hands below mine
In case it needed a soft place to land

I could see just how priceless it was
To my grandma that day
We admired it for a few minutes
Then returned it to its safe place

The Hummingbird

It was such a sad day
When she left to go home
I remember holding the Hummingbird box
Feeling so sad and alone

This treasure she left me
I keep in a special place on my shelf
I carefully brought it down
When I took a wife for myself

Now it sits in an honored Place
A symbol of my love
For the wife that God has given me
A gift from a winged angel
up above.

PARENTS

My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck. Proverbs 8:8-9

When I think of my parents, I experience every emotion. I had the most wonderful mother a child could ever hope to have and a bold disciplinarian father. I always knew he loved me and would die for any of his children. I was proud of my dad and his raw sense of humor. I did fear his wrath when I would occasionally wander onto the wrong side of his rules. My mother taught us how to love everyone and dad taught us the rules of life.

There were many changes in both of them as they got older. Mom became a lot more fiesty and willing to stand up for herself and dad started showing signs of dementia that created a lot of frustration and anger. I loved them both dearly. Losing both of them so close together made different changes in me. Some were good and some were bad. I really didn't start writing until later in life, so my poems about them mostly speaks of how I dealt with their passing. These were some of the most difficult days of my life.

THE NAP

I was just a small boy
Who, I'm sure, had been fussy that day
My mother decided
It was no longer time to play
She said we could take a nap together
Because she too needed some rest
So we went to my bedroom to shut our eyes
For however long we could get

It was a beautiful spring day
The sun was shining so bright
A breeze was blowing through the open window
All was peaceful, all was right
Momma drifted off to sleep
She was snuggled close to me
The curtains gently swayed in the breeze
I finally closed my eyes and fell asleep

That precious memory I would hold
For all of my life
A memory we would talk about
On the last night of her life
She drifted off to sleep
Because she needed some rest
I'll forever be thankful for her

And forever be blessed

FOREVER



I'll hear you in the sound a snowflake makes
As it gently settles
to the ground

I'll see you in the beautiful, vibrant colors of a
Rainbow in the early morning mountain mist

I'll feel you on the soft skin
Of a newborn baby

I'll be amazed by you in the fragile
And colorful wings of a butterfly

I'll smell you in the fragrance of
The first rose of spring

I'll forever hold on to your warmth
In our final caress

I'll thank God for the gift of you
forever

MOTHERS DAY



It was just another Mothers Day
And all the kids had come and gone
We'd laughed and talked of memories
Of childhood times at home

The evening started setting in
And supper came and went
My mind was on my Mother now
My rock, my dearest friend

I couldn't get her off my mind
I missed her with every breath
After many years of grieving
I still hurt from her death

My eyes got heavy sitting there
My reality turned to dreams
I entered into another world
Free from toils and schemes

I thought out loud, *"I'll just call mom up
I'm sure she'll take my call
Of all the loves of all my life
It's her I'd like to speak to most of all."*

I reached for my telephone
And then to my surprise
I *knew* Heavens' number

A small tear fell from my eye
An angelic voice answered
"This is Heaven, Can I help you?"
I was so shocked and excited
I didn't quite know what to do

When I had finally gathered myself
I boldly asked the Voice
"I want to talk to my Mother."
She said, *"That's an Interesting Choice.*
You see your mothers standing here
And she was calling you.
But here in Heaven, it's always Love
That just keeps shining through!"
There was a small pause
Then I heard the most wonderful sound of all
It was my mothers dear, sweet voice
On the other end of the call

When I was able to finally speak
We talked and talked and talked
We talked of kids and grandkids
And about our Christian walk

But then she finally said to me,
"Don't worry my dear Child
They'll come a day when you'll join us
And your grieving put aside
Your Dad, he's here too
With all of those, that you still hold so dear
So Patience until that Great, Great Day
That you'll be finally near."

We said goodbye
The phone went silent
And I awoke with a start
I looked down and noticed
The phone clutched close to my heart

It was a gift from God, I know it was
That's all that I can say
But I will never have, on this ole earth
A better Mothers' Day

A MOTHERS PRAYER



Taking time to look back
Reminiscing of a life gone by
I've been so very blessed
But never really wondered how or why

I can't help but think of momma
And the gift of all her love
The ever watchful heart she had
Was a gift from up above

Never, ever will I forget
The day that she went home
In all my numbness and my grief
I felt so all alone

I thought to myself of all the prayers
She prayed for us each night
Her fervent prayers with hands held up
To help us with our lives

I've heard and seen her pray
With such emotion and tears
Each word blessed with Grace
Countless millions through the years

Those prayers are now gone
The unconditional love as well
I feel the giant void
Deep inside my soul, I can really tell

What were those prayers?
I really wish I knew
If I just close my eyes I can hear her
As her loving heart began with a prayer so true

She'd pray:
Lord, give my son the happiness
He seeks each and every day
Teach him how to receive and give your love
Please teach him how to pray

Make him a Beacon of Light
That never will be hid
Tell him love is the legacy
To pass on to all his kids

Help him to tell the world, love's the answer
In everything he'll say and do
And to never forget Lord
That love is always you

Tell him Lord I love him
With a Mothers love
And even if I'm not there with him
I'll be waiting for him
With open arms
Up above

FINALLY HOME



The tears are here
Streaming down our cheeks
Her pain is now over
Her spirit is now Free

She has finished her race
It was anguished and sad
To know she is home-bound
Makes us all more than glad

But still the tears are here

The void that's created
Can never be filled
The memories so vivid
When we are quiet and still

The loss of a Mother
A wife, sister and friend
Is such a great loss
So hard to comprehend

But the tears are still here

On the streets of Heaven
Tears of joy fall like rain
A beloved believer
Is now coming home to take her place

They can't wait to welcome her
As she steps on those golden streets
There's a multitude of Angels
There for her to meet

And tears of joy fall
Like diamonds in her soul
Now, she's finally home
Now, she's finally whole

But the tears are still here.

SEASONS



The Cold winds blow hard
In the winter of my life
I lash out at everything
My kids, My God, my wife

Longing for my youth
Remembering my spring
I miss the days past
When energy and ambition were king

My summer days were filled
With hard work and great fun
Sports and young friends
And health by the ton

I barely noticed the autumn
My hair turned like the leaves
I knew the cold was coming
But still chose not to see

Now the winter is here
In all of its fury and pain
I look down at my legs
That once were so strong in the game

Now it's step by step
Each one is such struggle
Just to stand up from my chair
Is such pain and more trouble

My frustration is great
My patience is gone
My choices are few
I long for the sun

I desperately need the summer
To come back again
But I know this cold, cold winter
Will soon see my end

My wife lovingly served me
For all of my life
She shared all my struggles
And endured all my strife

Together we'll face this harsh winter
Warming each other with our love
Soon, we'll find our eternal springtime
In the sunshine of Heaven above.

MY DAD



He was rough and tough
A real redneck till the end
He was loud and he was funny
He was my dad, he was my friend

We played catch, we caught fish
We hunted squirrels, rabbits and ducks
I mowed the yard, took out the trash
To get my allowance of three or four bucks

I loved him and I feared him
Especially when he'd get mad
But I was always proud of him
Because no one had a dad like my dad

He wanted us to just be good people
To take care of our family name
But as his life grew longer
I noticed something just wasn't the same

As his flaming red hair turned to gray
And his smile began to fade
He looked back with regret
At some choices he had made

He loved us all, it was very true
I'll never, ever doubt that fact
But I only wish he could have recovered

And somehow got his sense of humor to come back
The world he was now living in
Was to him, devoid of truth and trust
We began to keep our space from him
And it became clear to all of us

He was changing in many ways
His mind was clogged with frustration and fear
Where had my dad disappeared to
The man that I held so dear

I now choose to remember those early days
When we caught fish and laughed out loud
Those precious days of a dad and his son
When he made me so very proud

Parents do such crazy things for their kids. We want them to be happy, healthy and safe. We go the very last mile and spend the very last cent to make that happen.

“The Karaoke Queen” is a story about a single mother who’s down on her luck and willing to try anything to make sure her kids have what they need. Her determination and struggle pushes her to do something to provide for them that is totally outside of her norm. It changes the lives of her little family forever.

THE KARAOKE QUEEN



She crept into their room
To kiss them goodnight
She wiped away her tears
She was weary from the fight
They lay there in peace
As they dreamed in their sleep
She was down to so few options
She dropped down to her knees
“Please Lord, she asked
Help me to help them see
I’m trying so hard to make it
To provide them what they need”

Her money was gone
The next day lay ahead
The cupboard was now empty
No canned goods or bread
She put on some makeup
Brushed her blonde hair
Put on her best dress
Then lay back in her chair
Her sister arrived
To stay when she left
She had to find work
She took a deep breath

Her car was not pretty
Her gas was so low

She took off just hoping
Her bad luck would go
Driving to town
She noticed the cars
Were all parked in the lot
Of the local town bar
Karaoke Tonight the sign blinked
And to her delight
She saw two hundred dollars
Was the Grand Prize that night

She parked her car
And walked to the door
The line was so long
She just stared at the floor
When she got to the front door
The man held out his hand
Ten dollar, cover charge
For the Contest", he said
She felt her heart racing
She had tears in her eyes
"Sir I don't have any money
I hope that's alright"
"I'm sorry" he said
As he pushed her aside
"It's the same for everyone
So, I'm sorry, Goodnight"

"I'll pay her charge"
Said a man on the right
"Let the lady on in
I need more singers tonight"
She didn't want to take the money

But she thanked him instead

“My name is Karen,”

She quietly said

“They call me Jack

I’m the Karaoke King

I own this here contest

Because girl, I can sing”

She thanked him again

Then turned to go in

She felt so alone

With no supporters or friends

She made her way to a table

Through the lights and the noise

She opened the song list

To find the right song for her voice

“There you are,” a voice thundered

Jack was there by her side

“I’ve been looking for you

Since you came inside

Do you mind if I sit down

For a minute or two

I can sense a real sadness

Karen, why are you so blue”

She didn’t quite know what to say

To this boisterous man

But he did pay her way in

So she slowly began

“Jack I’m a mother

Who is at her ropes end

I have two wonderful little boys

Who love me my friend

I'm broke and I'm desperate
And looking for work
I'm numb from the pain
And cried out from the hurt
I've never sang a note
Outside of my car
But tonight I need a miracle
Right here in this bar"

Jacks face was turned down
To his peanuts and beer
She noticed on his cheek
What looked like a tear
In a soft voice he whispered
"I'm so sorry for your plight
I'll do what I can
To try and help you tonight"
He got up from his chair
And walked slowly away
He made her feel better
Than earlier that day
She picked out her song
And she turned the slip in
Jack took the stage
With the biggest of grins

"You all know me
We've been coming here for years
We've shared lots of good times
And bad times and beers
I love to have a good time
And I love to sing
And of course you all know me

As the Karaoke King
But tonight there's a fresh face
Right here in our bar
She's had some tough times
And her life has been hard"
Jack takes off his cap
And he waves it around
He says, "I'll pass this ole hat
When she makes her first sound
So without further ado
And our first guest tonight
Here's Karen to come on up to the mic"

The loud bar grew quiet
As she made her way up
She just knew the crowd
Could hear her heart racing up
She got up on the stage
Then looked out at the crowd
They burst into applause
And whistles so loud
Jack passed his old hat
Starting out on the right
The music started playing
And she felt the cold fright

The words started without her
But she quickly caught up
She sang with such passion
Hoping it was enough
When finally the very last notes
Were played out
The crowd stood to their feet

And started to shout
“Karen!” They hollered
Until her head was a throb
She buried her head in her hands
And tried to thank them through her sobs

Feeling a huge hand on her shoulders
She turned around to see
It was Jack with his hat full of money
She asked, “This is for me?”
He smiled long and hard
He said, “Yes, this is for you
For now you can smile
And stop feeling so blue
She hugged him and thanked him
For what he had done
She said, “I’ll never forget
What you’ve done for me and my sons “

The years they went past
And she would often look back
To the night her world changed
And she met her sweet Jack
Now they sing together
In a life that’s a Dream
The Karaoke King Jack
And Karen,
his Karaoke Queen.

DEMENTIA

DO NOT ASK ME TO REMEMBER

*Do not ask me to remember,
Don't try to make me understand,
Let me rest and know you're with me,
Kiss my cheek and hold my hand.
I'm confused beyond your concept,
I am sad and sick and lost.
All I know is that I need you
To be with me at all cost.
Do not lose your patience with me,
Do not scold or curse or cry.
I can't help the way I'm acting,
Can't be different though I try.
Just remember that I need you,
That the best of me is gone,
Please don't fail to stand beside me,
Love me 'til my life is done.*

—Owen Darnell

REMEMBER WE LOVE YOU



You are here
Then you're not
You can remember
Now you've forgot

You're loving life
Then all is lost
You've got money to burn
Then ask, "How much does that cost?"

You'd really like a friend
Then sit in your room all alone
You ask every one to stop bothering you
Then complain no one calls you on the phone

You ask, why doesn't anyone come to visit
You might as well stay in the bed
But you don't remember
All the hateful things that you've said

Where did you go?
What happened and why
I miss your corny jokes
You were such a fun loving guy

I only get one father
And One mother too
Since she's been gone from us
You don't know what to do

Your dementia keeps growing
Every single day
The You we all loved
Is slowly fading away

To have you here with us
Your image so clear
But to see that vacant stare
Gives us sadness and fear

You wear your frustration
Like shoes that don't fit your feet
We dread that dark day
When your dementia is complete

We tell you we Love you
With tears filled with sorrow
Because we know you won't remember
When dawn breaks tomorrow

We'll keep telling you we Love you
We'll smile and be sad
We won't forget you were our Hero
Our Best Friend
Our Dad

LOVE IS LOVE



It was a cold winter day
As we rushed our way into the store
I passed by an elderly lady
Leaning on a car by the entrance door
She looked so weak and tired
Leaning on that cold car
Her eyes seemed so distant
Vacant and so far
I turned around to go back
To see if I could help
She was wearing only a light jacket
Hardly enough to warm herself
Can I help you ma'am?
Is there something I can do?
She said, I don't know where I am,
Do I know you?
We brought her a shopping cart
To help steady her as we walked inside
We asked, are you here with someone,
Did someone else drive?
Placing her hand on her chin to think
She searched and searched her brain
I know I came with someone
I think...Bradshaw is his name
I found her a seat
And we went to the service desk
To have them page her friend
We waited a few minutes

Then we paged the friend again
That's when we noticed him
Making his way down the aisle
As he got closer
We could see his crooked smile
Middy, he said
Why did you get out of the car?
You know it's cold outside
You could have fallen
Or wandered off too far
She looked him over
Then she said, Do I know you?
He turned his glaze to us and said,
Sometimes I don't know what to do
This beautiful lady is my wife
Going on 65 years
He then cleared his throat
To try and stop his flowing tears
Leaning on his walker
He told us about the Love of his life
She has always been my best friend
You couldn't ask for more in a Loving Wife
We raised three beautiful children
They come when they can to give us some help
But, Bless her Heart, She just has troubles
Taking care of herself
It's an Honor and a Privilege
To help her each and every day
Sometimes she even knows me
Sometimes she'll even Pray
I'll never leave her side
I'll always be her man
I don't know why she's become this way

I'll never understand
But Love Is Love
And ours will never die
Her hand still fits in mine
And I'll always be her guy
We helped them to their car
Closed the door
And watched them drive away
Our tears were cold on our cheeks
On that cold, blustery winter day
I hugged my wife and told her
Love Is Love my dear
I don't know what lies ahead
Just know I always will be near

SUICIDE

“It is not seen as insane when a fighter, under an attack that will inevitable lead to his death, chooses to take his own life first. In fact, this act has been encouraged for centuries, and is accepted even now as an honorable reason to do the deed. How is it any different when you are under attack by your own mind?”

– **Emilie Autumn,**

IT'S 9 O'CLOCK



It's 9 o'clock in the morning
Time to give you a call
Hopefully you've had your breakfast
And you're not too busy to talk

You're probably sitting in your chair
With at least one cat on your lap
I can see you in your t-shirt and shorts
Wearing that Korean Veterans Cap

But there's no answer this morning
And there won't be one tomorrow
You took away our conversations
And filled our hearts with sorrow

Old age was not your friend
It sat on your shoulders like a Beast
You cursed it and you loathed it
To say the very least

I'm not angry
But my questions will never end
Where were we in your thoughts
When you were thinking through the end

There's such a large void in our lives
That only you can fill
We'll try to fill it with good memories
When we are sitting quiet and still

Peace is what I pray for you
And for us, Healing and Love
Now no one will stop your singing
In that Heavenly Choir above

SILENCE



The silence is so loud
Sometimes it hurts my ears
I know you're far away
But somehow you're still so near

So many questions left unanswered
The truth so hard to find
Somehow your big ole voice
Is still playing in my mind

A vision in my head
A chair, a hedge, a note
It's what you didn't say that matters
In those random words you wrote

Your phone was ringing that morning
While you stood there looking at the view
I wish somehow you would have answered
Because we had plans for you

This loud silence will always remain
The wreckage now is clear
We'll sort through and keep the precious memories
That we now will hold so dear

THE BOX



It's all behind us now
He is gone and we are here
Today we shuffle through his belongings
And keep what, to us, is the most dear

Pieces of his life
Reduced down to a box or two
All furniture and clothing taken or donated
To friends, family and a select few

What to save, what to store
And what gets thrown away
One thing became obvious
To me that long sad day

Very little had any meaning
As I stared at the keeping box
Except a diary or two
Where he had written down a few thoughts

He always said we'd have a giant garage sale
When he was at peace and gone
He thought he had some treasures
That we could sell when he moved on

As I kept staring at that box
My mind began to ponder
What would I leave behind for my kids
When God called me home Up Yonder

I hope that I leave something
That will help them in their walk
I hope that I leave kindness
And a legacy of Love in their thoughts

I hope they can close their eyes
And feel the hugs so tight
And maybe bring a smile or a laugh
When they remember me late at night

I hope they Love their children
As much as I Loved them at the start
And protect them from their hurts
On their knees and on their Hearts

Then all will be just fine
When my clock hits its last Tick and Tock
Because then it won't really matter
What's in that little ole Box

LOVE

13 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned,[a] but have not love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;[b] 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never ends 1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-8

KISS ME IN THE RAIN



They had been apart so long now
She desperately needed to feel his touch
She wanted to be with him forever
She loved him oh so much

When she finally got his letter
That he would soon be coming home
She counted down every minute
The waiting was like nothing she'd ever known

His letter told her
Where to meet when he arrived
He told her by the old oak tree
Down the gravel road where they met that night

She took care of every detail
Her hair and his favorite yellow dress
Nothing was too good for him
Because her Love to him she would confess

She arrived at their special spot early
Because she couldn't wait to go
But she became concerned
When the winds began to blow

The clouds started rolling in
The sun disappeared behind the clouds
She vowed that nothing would spoil their reunion
Then the thunder rolled so loud

The rain started pouring down
Like the tears from her eyes
This was supposed to be so special
Then she saw his approaching lights

It was him and he was coming
He was finally home to start their life
She was ready for anything now
Even to be his Loving wife

His car pulled up and the door opened
He stood beside it in the rain
She was no longer concerned about the downpour
To be apart from him one more minute, was too much pain

Opening her door she ran to him
They fell into each others arms
He was finally home to her
Safe and away from harm

Taking her face into his hands
Wiping away her tears
He smiled and reassured her
No longer should she worry
No longer should she fear

He said, Kiss me in the rain
Not even a storm can stop our Love

Kiss Me In The Rain

Kiss me and feel the thunder
As your hand fits in mine like a glove

Look deep into my loving eyes
Feel my heart beating for you in my chest
Feel the warmth of my body
To just touch you I feel blessed

Then hand in hand they walked
To that special spot under their tree
Finally they were together
And together finally free

JUST ONE MINUTE



I wake up beside you
You're always here by my side
I watch as you lay sleeping
I kiss your cheek, I see you smile

My mind turns toward the work day
So very much to be done
I get dressed before the sunrise
I see the glow of the rising sun

The workday can be so crazy
But you never leave my mind
A call from you makes it worth it
Because I know at home what I'll find

I drive up in the driveway
With another day under my belt
All the days cold confusion
Begins in me to slowly melt

I come inside the doorway
To find you going about your day
I reach out to hold you
And to you I softly say,

Hold me for one minute
Hold tight and close your eyes
Hold me for just one minute

Just One Minute

Make my troubles melt like ice

Feel the warmth of my body

Then look into my eyes

Give me just one minute

For me to re-energize

When that minutes over

Give me just one kiss

Smile and say you love me

I live for minutes like this

Now I'm ready for anything

Like job and kids and life

Thanks for just that one minute

You're my love, my breath, my light.

MY UNIVERSE



The universe is such a vast expanse
And it's not the only one
In all the darkness and all the light
Billions of stars, millions of suns
Planet upon planet, moons, dark and bright
Dark sides and mysteries
Some visible, some out of sight
The country we live in is free, beautiful and vast
And the state we are from
We are so very blessed to be cast
From the deepest of space
To right here by my side
God gave me you
Among the billions he could have tried

We were meant to be together
There's no doubt in my mind
God looked the whole Universe over
And it was you for me to find
Together forever, and so very proud to be
No one could be better
For a lonely man like me

You are my universe, my air my sun
You're the better half of me
And together we make one.

I'M IN DEBT



I dont know what I”m gonna do
I’m in way over my head
And it’s all because of you
I’ve written checks i’ll never cash
I hear the calls inside my head
I don’t know what I’m gonna do
I’ll be in debt until I’m dead
I’m....In Love
And I.....owe you
And I.....can’t wait
To complete this merger with you
I’ll never pay you back
You’ve done so much for me
From my children to your love
I’ll pay it back so happily
I don’t know what I’ve done
To deserve someone like you
I just know that every day
My payment will come due
You can bank on it my dear
My interest will never fall
You gotta know when my phone rings
I won’t refuse your call
And when we both mature
And even if your Fanny May
Get a little fluffy
Count on me to always pay

THERE'S NO TELLIN'



I don't know where we're goin'
But I have such peace knowin'
You'll be there 'till the end
The water under the bridge is flowin'
And much deeper all the time
But together, we'll weather
Whatever hill there is to climb
My heart is in tune with yours
A song in both our hearts
Together we are music
Always have been from the start
The look in your eyes is precious
It gives my heart just what it needs
I hope I have the same look for you
Our love is like a seed
Ever watered with Gods grace
Our love will never die
Hand in hand we'll fly together
Through the clouds in Heavens sky
He created us both
And He knows how well we fit
We were made to be together
No matter how tough our lives get
There's no tellin' where we're goin'
But together we'll see it through
Because nothin' could be better
Than to walk this life
Hand in hand
With you

TOGETHER



We waited so very long
 To come back to this place
 It's a cold crisp winter day
 As we walk, we kick the leaves out of our way
 i feel the warmth of your hand
 So tightly wound around mine
 You've always been so very loving to me
 Always been so much more than kind

Of all the places that i could be
 Of all the loves that could be mine
 Of all the faces i could see
 Of all the hearts that for me shine
 It's you my dear, and only you
 I've given my life for
 And it's the minutes I spend with you
 That this heart so longs for

I can't decide what is more beautiful
 The mountain scenery or you
 The love that shines forth from your eyes
 Or the sky of brilliant blue
 I feel so very fortunate that God
 Has put us here
 To live our lives together
 Always closer, always nearer

YOU



I was in my deepest pit
With nowhere else to go
I reached out to the hand of God
Because I knew he loved me so

I asked Him for a heart so pure
Who would love me to the end
Someone with who I could spend my life
Who would be my dearest friend

As always when God's concerned
He gave me more than I could claim
He sent me someone who would love me so
And would forever share my name

I asked Him so very fervently
For a Heart I Knew was true
I asked him for my Hearts content
That's when God sent me you

WINDOW PAIN



She stares out of the window
Through the blueness of the night
The rain is trickling down the panes
Through the flashing of the lights

The thunder in the distance
Now so very far away
Reminds her of another time
Another Joyous day

It was going to be forever
When two became one
There was music, there was laughter
There was dancing, there was fun

A moment frozen in time
Like their youth in a frozen frame
She was giving up her single life
Even giving up her name

Turning slowly in her wedding dress
To her image in the mirror
Maybe tomorrow will be more lucent
Hopefully tomorrow, even clearer

Now her love for him is undeniable
She is finally ready to start again
She never thought she'd have a second chance
To fall in love with her dearest friend

She knows he would want her happy
Even if he wasn't by her side
The rain returns just like the memories
She holds so dear, so deep inside

The raindrops on the pane
Match the tears from her eyes
She can feel the thunder in her heart
And knows she'll love two for all her life.

THE HAND



Her feeble hands they trembled
As they clutched the pew that day
She closed her eyes and sang
Not one note of dismay

Beside her in her seat
Two Bibles, side by side
When the message started
She opened one and placed her hand inside

Her friends who sat beside her
Had noticed through the years
She always placed her hand there
Just why was never clear

The next Sunday they decided
They would finally ask her why
They waited by the front door
To ask her when she walked by

She walked up to them slowly
Struggling with her load
She stumbled on the steps
Her Bibles fell onto the road

They ran over to help her
She struggled to her feet
When they reached for her Bible
It was opened for all to see

Inside the cover was a hand
Traced onto the page
They handed her the Bibles
And helped her to her place

She placed the books beside her
Then worshipped with the rest
Her hand inside the cover
Her heart among the blessed.

When the service ended
They helped her to her ride
She said I know you're wondering
About the hand that's drawn inside

She steeled herself to tell them
She felt a rush of love inside
Reaching into her purse for a tissue
To dry a tear tracing from her eye

My dear husband gave me this Bible
Before he told me the news that dark day
That he would soon be leaving me
And that his cancer was back to stay

The Bible was in a box
He sealed it with a bow
He asked that I not open it
Until his time to go

When all was said and done
When I walked our house all alone
I opened up the box to read

The Hand

My loving husbands' poem

This Hand

This hand held yours so tightly
When we met and fell in love
This hand clasped with yours together
As we sought help from God above
This hand caressed our children
As we loved and held them tight
And checked their foreheads for fever
So deep into the night
This hand worked long hard hours
As we struggled to survive
This hand fits so perfectly
In the hand of my dear wife
So here it is my dear
Drawn upon this page
Please come and hold it daily
As you struggle with your age
I can't be there beside you
But soon we'll meet again
And hand and hand we'll walk
In a place that has no end.

KIDS

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Mathew 19:14

I have four daughters. All four are equally wonderful and each one comes with their own challenges and questions. Nothing on this planet could I love more. My daughters have had to develop some patience with me as I make my multitudes of mistakes trying to parent them. Sometimes I just blow it and other times I have to wait on them as they climb out of whatever hole they've fallen into. I always felt my job as their father was to protect them at all costs. If I could just keep them alive and well until they got to be functioning adults, I figured my job was done. I have discovered that is totally not true. They still need me and I still need them.

I never wanted them to be rich and famous, just happy, healthy and careful of our family name.

Having a child with disabilities everything changes. Four plus Four equals giraffe and the color blue smells like a watermelon. Seeing the world through her eyes is amazing to watch. I still learn from her everyday. I always complained that I didn't want my daughters to grow up so God gave me one that didn't. What a blessing !

CALL ME DAD



I didn't know what was happening
 behind that thick door
 But I knew when it opened,
 I'd be different than before,
 Where once there were two,
 I would very soon see
 Beautiful eyes of blue
 and us two, become three
 Bursting through that door
 in a box flanked by scrubs
 I would very soon discover
 what it meant to fall in love
 Feeling that heavy weight
 every dad feels inside
 I wanted to hear her little voice
 then the nurse made her cry
 The sound that came forth,
 pierced me straight to my soul
 I knew I must now protect her,
 like nothing I've ever known
 The tears they welled up,
 like my chest filled with pride
 I had never felt a rush
 like this of love deep inside
 You know the cry of a baby,

to some must seem sad
But for the first time in my life,
my new name was Dad
She captured my heart
with her sweet little voice
It was right then and there,
I knelt to thank God for his choice
He gave me this little one,
I just can't say why
But I'll cherish her and Love her
till the day that I die.

A PARENTS POEM



So tiny
So helpless
So needful of my touch

So precious
So special
I love her oh so much

My heart
So full
So blessed
Beyond my words

That pout
That cry
The sweetest sounds
I've ever heard

These tiny fingers
And tiny toes
I counted them
All ten

My soul
So full
Can't wait
To watch your life begin

I'll watch
I'll pray
I'll lead you
Through this life

My love
I promise
To be your shining light

Never fear
My tiny one
I'll keep you safe from harm
You'll always
Be so very welcome
In these warm
And loving arms

HOLD TIGHT ONTO INNOCENCE



Hold tight onto your child's innocence
Protect it with all your might
So few things are more precious
And so easily fade from their sight

Our children deserve to keep it
Their immortality and joy
Guard them with your prayers
Every Precious little girl and boy

Watch them playing
Watch them pretend
Guard that sweet innocence
Try not to let it end

Soon enough their blinders will fall
Soon enough they'll lay down their toys
Soon enough they'll feel those hurts and pains
Soon enough they'll hear the loud noise

Stop this old sad world right now
Hold tight that Innocence they enjoy
Soak in the here and now
Of all the giggles, smiles and Joy

Yes, Hold tight onto Innocence
Like a fine glass figurine in your hand
Be careful not to break it for them
Because it won't come this way again

JUST WAITING



She was here only yesterday
My friend who plays with me
I sit and watch for her return
Just where could my friend be

I'll watch a little longer
I just know she knows I'm here
I can't wait for her return
Her friendship to me is so dear
Who knows why kids are born
Who just aren't like the rest
It could be God puts them where
Special parents can be blessed
These kids are full of love
It overflows to those they trust
The question never comes up
Whether it's fair or if it's just.
If I just wait here long enough
No doubt we'll laugh and play
Just seems like it's been so very long
Can't imagine her delay

My dolls, my swing set and all my toys
Are here for just us two
If she doesn't come to play with me
I don't know what I'll do
The innocence of these children
Stays with them in their heart

*They don't understand
When friends grow up
To only leave them where they are
To them, friends are so very special
There love for them is deep
But time goes on
Friends come, friends go
They try so hard to see
I had another friend before who
disappeared like this
It's like she grew up and went away
Without even a goodbye kiss*

*It's getting dark, I must go in
No friend tonight for me
But that's OK, Ill be back here
Tomorrow waiting,
She'll be here,
You just wait and see.*

WHY THE ANGEL CRIES



She looks into the mirror
There's a monster looking back
There must be something terrible
To make the other kids turn and laugh

She tries and tries and tries
To stop this Beast that takes her pride
There must be something she can do
To help her broken heart, so deep inside

She really tries to hide herself
So others may not see
She can only wish she had the answer
To all her misery

There was a time she gave out hugs and kisses
And would smile and laugh and sing
But now people just seem to stare at her
And she feels their cruel sting

Her mommy and daddy love her
But she can see it in their eyes
Their hearts are breaking along with hers
So they wear a smile for their disguise

The medicines they give her
To help her in her fight
Are really hard to take sometimes
Because her mouth doesn't work just right

Why The Angel Cries

Sometimes it's very difficult
To carry on each day
Her struggle increases constantly
Each and every day

If only there were answers
To why this angel cries
And maybe a solution
To stop a disability this size

Then maybe she could look into
The mirror just once and see
Just what a gift you are my lovely child
To all the world
And me

I'M NOT PERFECT



I wasn't born perfect
There are flaws that you can see
You can point and you can laugh
Just try to love me, for me

Sometimes my life's a struggle
And I don't understand just why
I get so very frustrated
And sometimes, It makes me cry

I try to be like them
So that they might be my friend
I just seems they all grow up so fast
And our friendship comes to an end

I know that my God loves me
He sent his son for even me
His spirit lives inside
And in His spirit I am free

If I had to choose to have a perfect body
Or to choose to have a perfect soul
I know my choice is easy
Cause I know it's God that makes me whole

He'll always be my friend
From today until forever
And no matter what the world says

I'm Not Perfect

His love they'll never sever.

So, no, I am not perfect outside
And that's okay with me
Because I know It's inside

Where My Lord will always be

HAVE YOU SEEN HER



Have you seen her
I can't find her anywhere
I see her pictures in my Heart
It's not the least bit fair

She was here beside me
Not too long ago
Now she's disappeared
I can't imagine where she'd go

Please tell me if you've seen her
She's such a precious child
I don't quite know what to do
Maybe she's lost,
Afraid and tired

I watched over her so closely
And kept her so very close to me
I protected her and loved her
Then one day, I set her free

I watched her from afar
As she took her glance away
The dangers of the world surrounded her
And she bent to their evil sway

The world took my precious gift
And did such awful things

It persuaded her to follow them
Told her what songs to sing

Like a tiny glass figurine
That's been dropped and broke apart
So this bad world has done to her
As well as my own heart

So please tell me if you've seen her
Please tell me if you do
I want my gift to come back to me
She doesn't have to be good as new

I'll take her back, scars and all
I still love her with all my heart
She doesn't have to be perfect
You see, she's the missing piece
Down so very deep
In my heart

GRANDKIDS

Children's children are a crown to the aged, and
parents are the pride of their children.

Proverbs 17:6

*A Grandchild fills a space in your heart you
never knew was empty*

Anonymous

CHARLEYS' PICKLE



Some days she calls me Pickle
With that beautiful sparkle in her eye
Other days she calls me pepaw
With her laugh and toothy smile
She brings such joy to our lives
Full of such radiance and fun
Her unkempt curly red hair
As bright as the morning sun
Her childhood spirit so bubbly
And her humor so bright
She always makes me smile
With her amazing radiant light
What a gift she is to us
Each and every day
You never know what's coming next
Or just what she's going to say
She Loves her Yaya and momma
Her daddy and Ray Ray too
And none of us could imagine
Without her, just what in the world we'd do
She's the cats pajamas
And the apple of our eye
And one thing's for certain
This Pickle is one lucky guy

DIVORCE

I honestly think I have lived two completely separate lives. . It's like someone else lived the first one and it's just a story I talk about. I never ever considered going through a divorce. Not me!

Divorce isn't about splitting up. Divorce is a tear. A horrible, jagged tear. A tear you feel in every molecule of your body. If children are involved you can multiply the pain by a thousand.

The children are the real victims. They are the casualties. In the United States as of this writing, the failure rate of Marriage is 44%. That's a lot of pain.

TWO STORY HOUSE



It was his story against hers
They had agreed to disagree
He knows for sure he had done nothing wrong
Nothing he could say, could help her see

A few moments with friends
After work in a dark place
She got a phone call from her friend
Who had seen his smiling face

She prayed that there was nothing
Going on with him and her
She couldn't face the thought
He'd ever be with another girl

He said, "There were six of us
Sitting there at the table.
I would have changed the one who sat beside me
If I had been able."

Their loud screams and fighting could be heard
All through the house
The kids had all gone into their bedrooms
As the argument became too loud

He couldn't help but notice
She seemed so intense and so stressed out
He really thought she trusted him
He wondered what else this could be about

What he didn't know
And what she was keeping hidden inside
Was the fact that it was her
That was seeing someone else on the side

It was the terrible guilt she was feeling
And the raw emotion so very deep
She wanted to tell her loving husband
Of her secret thoughts to be free

But he had been so good to her
For all of these twenty years
She could see the puzzled confusion on his face
As he was holding back his tears

Their loud fight finally turned to silence
The towering flames were finally doused
Now they'll just continue to keep their secrets
And survive living in their two story house

IF ONLY



Sitting here all by myself
It's awful lonely here
I think of friends and family
That I do hold so dear
It's really easy now to think
But I dread it to begin.
The time is right, I know it well
For the "If Onlys," to creep in.

If Only I had money enough
To do with what I wish
If Only I had time to spare
To relax or read or fish
If Only I could take my kids
And hold them tight to me
To tell them how very much I care
And bounce them on my knee

If Only I could watch them grow
And lead them through this life
If Only I had a friend
That I could call my wife.
If Only I was satisfied
With where my life is now
If Only these "If Onlys"
Could go away somehow

I know that I must stop this woe
I can't keep going on
For Jesus loves me, this I know
But His work is left undone
In me He's working overtime
Freeing me from guilt and sin
To keep these awful "If Onlys"
From slowly creeping in.

A FATHERS LAMENT



From the miracle of your conception
To the day that you were born
I would stare for the longest hours
At the bed that you'd adorn

I wondered to myself
Were you a rowdy boy or a beautiful girl
But really it didn't matter
You'd be my diamond. You'd be my pearl

I can't forget that day
When the waiting time was through
I gazed at your beautiful face
And cried when I saw you

So overcome, with joy
And incredible pride that day
I never, ever thought
That you would go away

Who can say what happens
Or whose fault is a divorce
But when you left my arms
My life changed and went off course

Now we're so far apart
And seldom do I know
What your up to now
And how many inches have you grown

My love for you is constant
And never will it change
Oh God, help me to accept reality
Help my life to rearrange

My grip to life, my headlong charge
And my will to not give up
Is in the fact that you my dear
One day will grow up

It will take till then
For you to really understand
The haunting grip Divorce
Has on the children of this land

In all my heartache and all my tears
It's not me who suffers most
It's you my dear children
That takes the biggest dose

I know that my God forgives us
For what that we have done
But my prayers are for you my child
That you would find the Son

Be strong my small ones, don't give up
I know it's hard to understand
Just remember that I love you
As there are tiny grains of sand

ALL ALONE IN A PLACE CALLED HOME



The love song has ended
The last notes have been sung
She sits among the wreckage
All she feels is numb

She still can see the pictures
Hung with smiles upon the wall
It all seems so very long ago
Another life, a long, long fall

All alone in a place called home
I'm sitting here in so much pain,
I'm scared and all alone
You can't see the emptiness
And pain deep in my soul
I just keep crying and trying,
To get you off my mind
'T'm so alone in a place called home

She walks into her empty house
The silence hurts her ears
This is what she dreaded most
This is what she feared

She reaches out to hug the air
Her eyes they well with tears
They tell her time will heal the pain
But they say it could be years

All alone in a place called home
I'm sitting here in so much pain,
I'm scared and all alone
You can't see the emptiness
and pain deep in my soul
I just keep crying and trying,
to get you off my mind
'I'm so alone in a place called home

She knows that it won't be long
That soon she'll have her boys
But again the silence tears her heart
No boys, No Noise, No Toys

She hears the echoes of their voice
"Oh Mommy come and see"
She feels so empty deep inside
And drops down to her knees

She looks up to the stars above
Breathes deep and dries her eyes
She knows somehow she'll love again
She knows somehow she'll try

She won't sit here in so much pain
Not scared and all alone
She'll never let him see the emptiness
and pain deep in my soul

She'll just keep crying and trying,
To get on with her life
And start her new life
in a place called home

PLEASE DON'T CRY



It was somewhere back in childhood innocence
I can't remember just where or when
But the man I loved so dearly
Who had become my closest friend

Came to me one day
With tears falling from his eyes
He tried to speak and tell me
I was going to start a new life

He reached out to touch my face
To tell me he had to leave
He said, "*Please don't cry, I love you*
It's not your fault, you must believe."

He said, "*Please don't cry, i love you*
I'll see you soon my dear
We'll hug and have fun together
There's no need for tears."

He was always there for me
On weekends and important days
But it was always so hard to say goodbye
And watch him drive away

As I grew older, it grew easier to understand
His love was unconditional
I made mistakes
He held my hand

I fell in love and life went on
And i learned just what love meant
I looked into the eyes of my child
That for sure was heaven sent

Dad would come over to visit
And whenever he would turn to leave
I could feel the tears well up inside
And he would say to me

*“Please don’t cry, I love you
I’ll see you soon my dear
We’ll hug and have fun together
There’s no need for tears.”*

I watched him as he grew older
His youthful blonde was turned to gray
My kids grew up and loved him
They always hated when he drove away

I still have chills when I remember
The night I got the call
Please come quick, there’s something wrong
The leaves were turning in early fall

I arrived in the room and they told me
He’s been waiting to have you near
And in the voice i loved so much
So faint, I leaned in to hear

He said,
*“Please don’t cry I love you
I’ll see you soon my dear*

Please Don't Cry

*Oh what a Hug we'll have together
There's no need for tears
This time is no different
You know I always will be near
So, please don't cry, I love you
I'll see you soon my dear."*

ADDICTION

¹² Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

*¹³ When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴ but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. **James 1:12-15***

I have witnessed numerous people in my life that were so full of potential and promise only to be thrown off course and even destroyed by addictions. It’s so terribly sad to watch as they throw away their loved ones and family and even their own children to acquire what they need. The road to their recovery is difficult and requires an incredible toughness and determination. Some survive it and others don’t. Relationships are mended and then lost again as their failures are numerous. They struggle to reclaim the life they so willingly threw away.

THE MONSTER



He hounded her and stalked her
His bloodshot eyes watched her day and night
She sensed He was always there watching
And could see she was growing weary from her fight

They told her to let him in
Just to see if she could cope
They never told her of the Darkness
Never told her it was the end of all hope

At first she was terrified
When she slowly opened the creaky door to let Him in
Just maybe He could really help her
And maybe she was ready to begin

He numbed her pain and made her happy
Then he brought in His friends to join in the fun
To feel His presence was now her only Happiness
The end of real Love had now begun

Nothing was more important
Not her family, her kids or even life
She was living on the edge
The edge of an ever sharpened, cutting knife

The Monster had taken over her world
Her health, her body, her face
Now looking in the mirror
She noticed someone else
Had taken her place

“Who is this person?” She shouted out loud
“This image is old and sick and weak!”
“I want to see my kids and family
It’s real love and happiness that I seek!”

“They don’t love you.” She heard him say
As darkness drifted into the room
“You know you can’t stop needing me
A little of *this* will help your gloom

“I knew I had you the day you let me in
Remember that was your choice to be my friend
Now you belong to me my dear
Until the very end.”

This could be the end of the story
Another tragic wasted life
But against all odds she began to fight him
With the fire of determination blazing in her eyes

It was two steps forward, then three steps back
As she battled every day
She fought and fought her addiction
Such tiny steps along the way

It was the hardest thing she’d ever done

And some days were tougher for sure
But slowly, she could finally see the light
Every step, every breath hard to endure

Her life will always be a work in progress
A bloody fight someday she'll win
Watch her now as she helps all of those people
Who let the Monster of Addiction
Walk right in

ADDICTION



Seven stories high
I look down
Through an open window

I look out
To see a view I always took for granted
A sight I always treasured
Now awash in black smoke

Behind me
My life burns
Behind the fire beckons me
A fire of my creation

Burning everything dear to me
Destruction in every room
Saviors below me
Beckoning me to take the plunge

A plunge to a new beginning
I should jump
I want to be free from the danger

Feeling the flames
I step to the ledge
Crouching to jump
I pause to look back
And Wonder

Should I go back for my matches?

THE BEAST



The alarm clock breaks the morning silence
Head in hands, sore, wracked with pain
He swore he'd never
Ever drink like that again

But he walked into his Lair
Didn't see him standing there
He put his claws down deep inside
He had nowhere left to hide

He had to Feed The beast

He walked into his workplace
They all could tell just where he'd been
The bloodshot eyes they tell the story
Of his struggles and his Sin

They know he walked into his Lair
Wouldn't see him standing there
They knew the claws were deep inside
And they knew he wouldn't hide

He had to Feed The Beast

He's on his way home from work now
And the craving soon begins
The Beast he starts to growl
And on his Face an Evil Grin

Cause he knows he's coming to his Lair

He won't see him standing there
He has his teeth down in his soul
And he's lost all self control
And he's growing bigger still
Going straight in for the kill
And when his evil's done
He knows he's not the only one

Who wants to Feed The Beast.

FAITH

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not
on your own understanding;
6 in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:5-6

How can a fish breathe out of water? How can a light bulb
glow without electricity?

How can we live our lives without Hope and Faith?

I couldn't imagine facing the strong winds of life without
knowing He was there holding me up and pushing me forward
to my destination.

THE RAINBOW



The darkness surrounds me
I don't know where to go
I know that God loves me
I Feel it in my Soul
But there's so much sadness here
At every turn, a bad choice
I feel I've lost my vision
I feel I have no voice
The loneliness covers me
Like a wet blanket
The emptiness is complete
In my heart
I no longer can hope to finish
I can't find a good place to start
I need answers and I need them now
Family and friends have left my side
I know it's all up to me now
There's absolutely nowhere left to hide
Then I saw a Rainbow

THE ANSWER



Searching for those answers
Digging ever so deep
How can you solve your problem
Should you stay or should you leave
There's only one answer
Just look up above

Love is the answer
It's always the answer
And God is love

Sadness surrounds and grips you
You don't know where to turn
You sense the darkness inside you
You feel the acid burn
You want to move forward
But you need a big ole shove

Love is the answer
It's always the answer
And God is love

It sounds so very simple
And so very hard to believe
That no matter what your dilemma
Or what crisis you can see

Insert love into the equation
You'll see with different eyes
You can just expect it to happen
They'll be no surprise
It works in every situation
Sure as the sun shines up above

Love is the answer
It's always the answer
And God is love

TOMORROW



He only got so many
In the beginning, too many to count
At the start he didn't even consider them
But slowly, oh so slowly, they started to count down

His life began so carefree
Full of energy and light
No walls to contain him
The edges of his world out of sight

Childhood joys and fun behind him
He searched to find his way
But there was plenty of room to wander
Still lots to learn and play

He found someone to join him
A hand to hold as he walked along
Someone to share the path he was on
Someone to join him in his song

Looking back behind him
He saw his partner holding tiny hands
The duet that he'd been singing with
Was now a quartet, new members in their band

Putting the small ones on his shoulder
They continued on down the trail
The job of protecting the little ones
Was a task he could not fail

Before long the load was too heavy
So he put them down to find their way
They went out to find their own path
And make their own choices day to day

Holding tighter to the hand
That walked with him by his side
He noticed the path was becoming more narrow
More steep and rocky, less places to hide

As the path got darker
The bushes and trees started closing in
They tried to hold each other up
Hoping for a small ray of light to begin

There were thorns and stickers beside them
He brushed them aside to make their way
He noticed the hand he'd held so tightly
Had let go and gone away.

Stopping in his tracks, he thought back
To all the tomorrows he had when he began
They'd trickled down to just a few
It was never part of his plan

The darkness now engulfed him
The path was no longer there to see
There were no more tomorrows
He slowly dropped down to his knees

We hurry through life like its forever
Work and bills and stress
We pass by what's so important

Never realizing just how much we're blessed

If we choose to walk our paths
Without the Light we desperately need
Then darkness is our destination
Life will be a real struggle indeed

Make those Hugs last longer
Live and Love and Pray
Look forward to your tomorrows
As they slowly melt away

WAITING FOR THE ANGELS



My body feels so very heavy
Laying here on this old bed
My words now come in whispers
But I've heard everything
They all have said

*I sit here with my friends
I'm trying to ease their pain
There's only so much I can do
There's only so much they can gain*

My wonderful husband
Holds my hand and strokes my hair
His love and prayers so diligent
As he sits steadfast in his chair

*Hospice work is a blessing
But always has the same end
You fall in love with a sweet spirit
But you always lose a friend*

We both know I'm going home
We've talked about it for months on end
I just worry about him so much
He's been my rock, my soul mate, my friend

*This sweet lady and her husband
Their Hearts tied together for so many years*

*They seem to share one spirit
But I think he's almost out of tears*

He talks to me about our life together
He shows me the old black and white photos
Of us in our prime
But I know how used up I feel
And I know it's so close to my time

My friend from the Hospice is here
Always tending to my needs
She's always been so kind and understanding
To my husband and me
She sits beside him
She has become a dear, dear friend
Now she sits and waits
Holds our hands and awaits my end

It takes all I have to lift my arm
To touch his time worn face
He knows God has a job for me
And has prepared for me a place

*Her strength is almost gone
She reaches up to touch his face
I know if he had the choice
He would gladly take her place
But wait ! What's going on?
She's sitting up and reaching for the sky
I know she's seeing something there
The tears are pouring from her eyes*

What is this?

The ceiling is turning
To beautiful Rainbows of Light
I reach out to take the hand of an Angel
As even more Angels come into sight
I feel so much Love and energy
As they pull me from my earthly home
I just wish I could tell my family
I really wish that they could know
The heavy weight that held me down
Is gone as I float through the air
I know my Heavenly home awaits me
I can't wait to spend eternity
With Jesus there.

STEP BY STEP



Continue on
Step by step by step
No matter what the obstacle
No matter what lay ahead

Keep your vision forward
Keep your hope steadfast
Always moving forward
Ever onward toward the task

Take the hand that's there beside you
Take Him with you on your quest
Never letting go
Always giving your very best

Hold tightly
The choice is yours to make
When you're uncertain
Hold even tighter on your way

You may let go of His grasp
But beside you He'll always be
Those nail scarred hands will protect you
Then forever set you free

The next poem came about when I was going through some old boxes in my basement. It was time to do some cleanup and do away with stuff that I no longer needed. On the bottom of one of the stacks I found an old box with no writing on it so I opened it up to see what was inside. It turned out to be a box we had from my grandfather. In it was sermons and songs he had written. This particular one caught my eye. He had started it and never finished it. The opportunity to be a part of something with him was heartwarming. I took it and carefully worked on it and

came up with this poem. I love you grandpa Thomas!

THE OLD CROSS ROAD



Ancel P.Thomas/Mark W. Stracener

There is many a road
In this world of sin
But only one
When our Christian lives begin
Where the Crown of Life
And Friends now wait
Only One Way
to the Pearly Gate

There are many who struggle
In this old world below
The Heavenly Road
They fail to know
Now the Old Cross Road
So Beautiful and Straight
Is the only way to the Pearly Gate

Some of todays roads
Go down below
Some travel there
Who fail to know
It's the Old Cross Road
Where my Saviors been
He lights the road
Through this dark world of sin

The Old Cross Road

I mind not their requests
To walk their new made roads
As I travel on towards
My blessed abode
To my Crown of Life
Where friends now wait
Still the only way to the Pearly Gate

SIMPLY PARADISE



I lay here on the lush green grass
A breeze blows through my hair
How blessed I am to rest here now
Without a need or care

The smell of spring is all around
Beautiful birds fill up the sky
The trees are full, the flowers bloom
In their midst are butterflies

I hear a choir of multitudes
Not very far away
Their harmonies, so fine and true
Not one note of dismay

I hear a voice and turn around
And who else could it Be
But Jesus, my closest dearest friend
Who'd like to sit and talk with me

We both sit back and wonder at
The beauty All around
I thank him for His loving sacrifice
And this paradise I've found.

PERFECT HARMONY



We all seek out the harmonies
In all our daily lives
Something to make our lives complete
Something to make us thrive

The notes aren't always perfect
Though we try and try and try
But You dear Lord are faithful
And standing so close by

You are my harmony
You make my voice complete
The perfect pitch
The perfect note
That makes my life so sweet

Together we make music
Alone, there's just one voice
But put the two together
It's so much more than noise

My inner music is beautiful
And it's all because of you
The perfect harmony impossible
Until you come shining through

So walk along beside me
And listen to us sing

Rose City Redneck

Because nothing could be better
Than to harmonize with the King

You are my harmony
You are my harmony

I HAVE NO ARMY



The grocery store was crowded
As I stopped on my way home
Standing in line I noticed her
An old woman frail and all alone
She looked so small and vulnerable
Standing there beside her cart
I couldn't tell if she was done shopping
Or, she was just about to start
The only things in her basket
Were tuna, an apple and some cheese
The cashier totaled up her purchase
"That will be 3 dollars and 60 cents please"
The little old woman fumbled in her purse
To gather up her cash
But when she pulled her money out
She let out an audible gasp
She handed the cashier 2 dollar bills
Then went for a change purse in her bag
I could see her face turn from concerned
To tearful then to sad
she told the Cashier , "put the apple back
It's really more than I need
I can get by without it
It's not like I have an army to feed."
I no longer could stand and watch
I offered to pay her bill
She pulled her glasses down her nose
Bowed her head and got quite still

“Young man,” she said ,”You have a family
And I’m sure they need your help
I appreciate your kind offer
But I can take care of myself
A man behind me shouted,
“I have more bread than I need!
What you said was right
I have No Army to feed.”
Then another and another
spoke up to fill her Cart
I knew one thing for certain
As her basket filled, so did my Heart
She stood there speechless
Before reaching in her purse down deep inside
She pulled out a single white tissue
to wipe the tears falling from her eyes
“You’ve all been so kind to this old lady,
I can’t thank you enough for all this food
but I know one thing for sure,
God is good, yes, God is good.

DELIVER ME



It was her job to do
In rain, sleet or snow
The mail had to be delivered
But today, her steps were kind of slow

Still fuming from a fight
With her husband the night before
She didn't know if her marriage would survive
She didn't know if she could take it anymore

She went about her route
Just trying to finish her day
She was stepping off a front porch
When she heard someone say

"Good morning young lady
I hope your having a good day"
Looking back at the front porch
An elderly lady pushed
An old screen door out of her way

"Would you like to come in for some breakfast?
I won't hold you too long,
You know your welcome to come in
Unless your boss thinks it's wrong."

She was taken aback
She didn't quite know what to say

But they had a good visit on that porch
And it helped to bring a smile to her day

She sat silently at the supper table
With her husband that night
Something told her to tell him about her visit
Instead of holding it inside

He told her after her confession, “Be careful,
You never know about people like that.
Besides, you could get into trouble,
Let’s just leave it at that”

She’d always smile
When she came to her street
She thought today would be a great time
to take her up on the offer to come in and eat

Looking through the screen
The lady was waiting for her return
She gave the same offer as always
But this time, the mail lady showed no concern

“You bet I’ll come in and eat
I’m pretty hungry I’d say”
I could smell your Breakfast
Through the screen door,
And I’m in no hurry today”

Their visit was brief
But meaningful for sure
She knew she had found a friendship
That for years would endure

Biscuits and gravy
Was the morning treat
And they decided they'd plan
A weekend to meet

It took a lot of convincing
To get her husband and kids to come along
But together, they drove over
She told them to put their manners
And nice faces on

Walking into the house
His awkwardness he couldn't disguise
The elderly lady could see it
So clearly in his eyes

She came over to hug him and the kids
To make them feel at rest
She said, I don't have many things
But my life has been blessed

She pointed to all the pictures on the wall
Of her husband and kids
They were my life, my love and my passion
The sparkle in her eyes could not be hidden

They all sat down to a wonderful dinner
And she served them so well
They could tell she loved to serve
It was so easy to tell

After dinner the photo albums came out
And each picture shined with such love

She was very careful to give credit
To her God up above
Then with a hug and a kiss
And some leftover apple pie
They left to go home
And she noticed a tear
In her husbands eye

“What’s wrong?”, she asked
Is everything ok?”
After quite a long pause
He began to say

“I want what she has,
I want one day to look back,
To show someone our photo albums
And to be a better husband and dad.
I know the road we’re on
Is going nowhere
I want to be on her road
I want to go there.”

Her tears then began
As they drove their way home
The next weekend she went to church,
But this time not alone
They were all smiles and hugs
Holding hands as they walked down the aisle
In the back pew their elderly guest
Couldn’t help but shed a tear
Through her smile

I WANT TO SEE WHAT SHE SEES



Looking around my world
I see evil and wrong
Sometimes I feel like an Alien
Most times I don't belong

What used to be right
What used to be just
Has now been replaced
With arrogance and distrust

I long for another time
When there was goodness and light
I long for my childhood
When life wasn't such a fight

I think of my mother
And where she is now
My soul longs to join her
To visit her somehow

I want to see what she sees
I want to hear her sweet voice
I want to smell the roses of Heaven
If I could just have that choice

I want to shield my eyes
Because the Golden Streets are too bright
Oh, but to soak in the beauty
Of every awesome, majestic sight

But the worlds not going to change
From its darkness to light
I have no control
Of its sadness and plight

But I know my God's in control
Of this world and it's woe
He'll continue to bless His children
Under Heaven below

I know all will be good
I have no fear
I know I'll be more than safe
Because my mother whispers in His ear

THE HOLIDAYS

All of us have wonderful memories of Holidays past. Our childhood was full of wondering what we would get for Christmas or longing to see beloved family members around the table at Thanksgiving. There are so many precious memories.

Losing your parents and grandparents changes the Holidays completely. You enjoy watching your children get excited about that magic time of year but so much is different. My mother was such an excellent cook and she absolutely loved making those Holiday desserts and candies for everyone to enjoy. Occasionally I would stay up with her as she cooked and basted that turkey in the oven. Those Holiday smells and memories stay with me. These memories are a true Holiday Gift!

MY GIFT



For as long as I can remember
When Christmas rolled around
Momma always made sure
A Gift from her was found

The contents changed through the years
First toys, then clothes or books
There was always a special feeling
To tear open that box and take a look

Time marched on
Her Christmas decorations got smaller
With less lights and much less fuss
But she still looked so forward to the season
When she would get to hug and kiss all of us

Her candies and cookies were so special
The priceless recipes so great
We'd always sit around and laugh and joke
With those awesome treats upon our plate

As time flew past
She never changed
Her Love, Hugs and Smiles never stopped
Until one Christmas morning
I held in my hand a Gift that she had bought

She had finished her shopping early
Then she flew home to be with her Lord
And this small box from her to me
Just couldn't be ignored

The contents probably weren't that special
A Shirt or socks or tie
But I just couldn't open it
With the tears falling from my eyes

Now every year I re-wrap the gift
I take such pains to get it just right
Creasing every side and corner
Until it's all smooth, straight and tight

With every fold I think of her
With every cut a thought
Of all the Love she gave to me
No amount of money ever could have bought

I then place upon the Gift
A festive beautiful bow
Then place a tag beside it
That says, for Mark, so all will know

It reminds me what a gift God gave to me
The day that I was born
More than any gift
I could get on Christmas morn'

MOTHERS HELPER



With an apron around her waist
And love in her heart
She brought out all her special pans
And prepared everything to start

Tomorrow was Thanksgiving
There was a lot to be done
She layed out all her special recipes
Then she heard a question from her small son

“Whatcha doin’ momma?”
“Can I help you somehow?”
She stopped to think and said
“You sure can son, just not now.”

“Ok, momma.” He said, as he pulled out a chair
He could smell the sweet aroma
Of fresh baked pies wafting in the air

She went about her cooking
Like a well oiled machine
He was amazed by her knowledge
And how she kept her hands so clean

Then she brought him a bowl
With some flour and eggs
And a big wooden spoon
That seemed as big as his leg

She kept him so busy
Doing this and then that
Then she took his flour concoction
And with a rolling pin, smashed it out flat

Then signaling him over
To give her a hand
She opened the fridge
He could see a huge turkey in a pan

Together, they grabbed hold of the pan
To take it to the sink
He'd never seen a bird
So Naked and so Pink

He touched its cold turkey skin
So weird to the touch
Looked up at his mom and said
"We'll never eat that much."

With so much help from her son
This team carried on
They never even noticed
The setting of the sun

Handing him a stick of butter
Putting it in his hand
She told him,
"Rub this all over that turkey"
Then he followed her plan

They shared so many smiles
As she trained her cooking intern

The time to her so precious
Because he was so happy and able to learn

Later that night, she told him,
“You go ahead and go to sleep”
But he stayed up with her through the night
And occasionally they’d take a peep

He did finally fall asleep
Somewhere in the night
She felt so blessed to have him
Right there by her side

The next day when they served the turkey
It could not have been better
Because it was made by a team of cooks
A mother and her helper

JUST LIFE

*“The meaning of life is to find your gift. The
purpose of life is to give it away.”*

Pablo Picasso

THE GARDENER



She was a gardener
 She loved beautiful things
 She surrounded herself with flowers
 That drew hummingbirds on the wing
 She searched all the garden nurseries
 Looking to add more beauty to her world
 Until one day an unusually unique plant
 into her life unfurled
 She brought it home to care for it
 It surely would be her prize
 She loved it and watched over it
 The plant so very beautiful in her eyes
 Watering and checking it daily
 She waited for the bloom
 Surely it would soon flower
 Surely it would happen soon
 The days became weeks
 The weeks became months
 She finally saw it wasn't to be
 This beautiful plant was no flower at all
 Just a healthy, beautifulweed

HORSE FEATHERS



Blue tennis shoes on alligators
Some things just don't make sense
Horse feathers and chicken lips
Or pole turtles on a fence

Looking around at this ole world
Nothing is as it should be
Boys are girls and girls are boys
None of it makes sense to me

Maybe I've lived much too long
But my neck is so sore
From shaking it side to side
Now when the news comes on
I find me a good place to hide

Rattlesnake hips and eight-dollar cups of coffee
Make my brain swoon and wonder why
They both make about as much sense
As two dollar bottles of water to this guy

So what does it all mean
How can I relate
To a world that's g one bat poop nuts
Guess I'll get back up tomorrow
And somehow find my same ole rut

If I don't think too hard
To try and figure out
Just how and why and when
And ignore all the total foolishness
Maybe just maybe I'll find my sanity again

WORDS OF LIFE



Darkness, Light
Love, Fight
Sadness, Cheer
Gladness, Fear
Hopeful, Sad
Goodness, Bad
Loving, Hate
Wanting, Wait
Hugs, Apart
Broken, Heart
Giving, Taking
Sleeping, Waking
Work, Rest
Worse, Best
Yes, No
Staying, Go
Cradle, Grave
Hopeless, Saved
Living, Death
Gasping, Breath
Holding Tight
Touching, Sight
Hearing, Taste
Plenty, Waste
Get, Give
Die, Live
Words of Life
We're all the same

We search for Love
We play the Game
Make your words be kind today
Be careful what you do and say

THE CLOWN CAR



It's so heavy
Sometimes it's hard to take another step
So many things are on our shoulders
We just gasp for our next breath

As we age, our cloak gets heavier
We put on layer after layer after layer
We constantly look Heavenward
Sending up prayer after prayer after prayer

Relationships, finances, aging parents and kids
It seems there's just no end
We stiffen ourselves for what's next
But sometimes we just can't bend

A moment of peace and solitude
Is what we truly crave
But when we think we've finally gotten a respite
More bats fly out of the cave

A poster child for stress and exhaustion
Is what we truly are
We've gotten numb watching
All the silly clowns get out of our car

So what's the answer?
What do we do?
How can we find joy and happiness in our life?

How do we take off that heavy cloak
and drop the stress and strife

How do we put the bats back in the cave?
The clowns back in the car
Could it possibly be so simple
to look in the mirror and really see who we are

All we can do is be the best we can be
To be the person a Loving God made us to be
Because when we look through His eyes to see
We are victorious, loved and free

THERES NO CAT ON MY BEACH



On a beautiful beach in my dream
Sand in my toes, cold drink in my hand
It's shattered by sounds
I can't quite understand

There's no cat on my beach
There's no paw in my eye
Slowly opening my eyes
I slowly realize

The stupid cat is hungry
Then I glance at the clock
Oh my gosh, I'm late to work
So I go into my morning trot

Fumbling through the dark closet
To gather my clothes
Then running to the bathroom
To brush my teeth and blow my nose
I must feed the stupid goldfish
Before I rush out
Only to find Goldie, belly up in her bowl
Oh she's dead, there's no doubt

That's going to be a really sad kid
When she finally wakes up
Now she'll want a bird
A lizard, pony or pup

Theres No Cat On My Beach

No time for that now
I've got to Rush out
If I'm late for work again
They'll fire me, no doubt

Grabbing my keys
My wallet and my pride
I jump in the car
For a fast, stressful ride

As I back out of the driveway
I think I've run over a log
Oh my, what have I done
I've backed over Stanley
My Neighbors 3 legged dog

I have no time for sentiment now
He'll see him soon enough
The clock is rapidly ticking
I glance at my gas, It's just not enough

Quickly pulling into the station
To pump me some gas
I grab a couple gallons
Because that would be fast

The card won't work in the pump
So I have to go in
It's Todd the cashier
He has more tattoos than he has skin

Your card is declined
He boldly mumbles out

His tongue ring clinks against his tooth
As he sticks his tongue out

I plead, Man I'm in a big hurry
You know I'm in here all the time
I've got no Cash and no more cards
Not even a dime

You know I'll catch you tomorrow
If that's okay
He strokes his bleached goatee
Smiles and then starts to say

Mr. Johnson, How about a tip
The next time you roll in
What about 10 bucks
Both his teeth shine as he grins

Whatever you say
Was my speedy reply
Now I've got to go Todd
I've got to fly
With tires squealing loud
And smoke in my wake
I've got just enough time to make it
Before I'm too late

Clacking and smoking
As I hit 95
I think I can make it
But ole Betsy might not survive

I make all the lights

And no cops see my sin
The parking lot seems oddly empty
As I rush my way in

An old man in a guard uniform
Starts walking to my car
He's kind of spooky
Kinda strange and bizarre

Getting out of my car
To run to the clock
He raises his hands up
And he hollers, hey stop!

Is there some kind of emergency
Just why are you here
We haven't opened on Saturdays
For over 10 years

I felt quite a shock
When I realized what I had done
I should still be in my bed
Dreaming of sand and the sun

My phone starts ringing
My wife says, where did you go?
The neighbors at the door
And he wants to know

Who ran over Stanley
His best friend in the world
And not only that
You've got a very sad girl

She kept rattling on
About this and then that
I got back in my car
Took a deep breath and just sat

With the smoke still rising
From under my hood
I turned back to go home
To do just what I should
I'll tell my neighbor I'm sorry
Hug my daughter and flush her fish
I'll continue to do what's right
Feed the cats, buy a new goldfish

I'm blessed beyond measure
I've known that since the start
I may have a scrambled up brain
But I've got a full heart

THE POND



A calm clear pond
Undisturbed
Its mirrored visage
Reflecting all around
A beautiful array of nature
A small pebble thrown
The mirror broken
An ever expanding circle
Of ripples and reflection
The world of the pond
Changed
For a moment
Still beautiful in its change

CHOICES



My life is a stew
Of people, places and things
Some good choices made
Whether to cry or to sing
Choices that were made
Some good and some bad
Friendships and losses
Great times and times sad

I am what I am
Because of all this
The dark and the light
The tears or a kiss

If only I'd said yes
Instead of saying no
If only I'd said stop
Instead of saying go
If only I'd looked
Before I jumped in
If only I'd tried
Instead of letting it end

The roads that I travel
And the turns that I make
The candles I blow out
On a fiery birthday cake
I'll continue to try

To do what is right
And when I make a mistake
I'll try to keep it out of sight

THE HOURGLASS



I have a beautiful hourglass
I treasure it more each day
I watch others as they trod along
Kicking Sand out of their way
My sand grows more precious
As it drops down and out of sight
I can't replace it in my glass
Though I try with all my might
Each person has their own hourglass
The grains grow fewer As the days go by
So, instead of trying to replace the sand
Just thank God for His wonderful gift of life

*For I am convinced that neither death nor life,
neither angels nor demons, neither the present
nor the future, nor any powers, neither height
nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will
be able to separate us from the love of God that is
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38-39*

Life! Thanks God! What an incredible Gift! I hope I didn't take it for granted or stain it with my constant bad choices. Thanks for the Great Opportunity!

Thank you for your son Jesus!

I sincerely hope you have enjoyed this walk through my life so far. I hope you could relate to some of these poems. Hopefully, you shed a tear or felt a twinge of love. Maybe one of these poems brought back a wonderful memory. Thank you for giving me a few moments of your very precious time.

Mark W. Stracener

