

# Poems by Paul Liebow

## Auroras Over Acadia

I love the Aurora when it's low  
On the far horizon, faintly gleaming,  
Like the cloud city which I know  
Will quench the nostalgia of Arctic dreaming.

I love the Aurora's green dance, churning Like a  
river of metal and crystal,  
And when it's a warm red waterfall-Aftermath  
of love and home-fires burning.

I love the Aurora when it pulses in rhythm Like  
the sound of a glass harmonica,  
And sways with the Sun as it vibrates,  
Like a transparent bell in a hymn.

I love the Aurora most when it streams  
Down from the very top of the sky,  
Its swirls and the twirls are the sides  
Of the circus tent where I lie in my dreams.

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## Cranberry Island Childhood Trilogy

My childhood on Cranberry Island  
is a deep blue opal  
of clear skies and sparkling waters  
nestled in a golden nugget of sunshine,  
a closely held secret deep in my soul.

To this day,  
vivid memories float to the surface  
at odd times to sustain me-  
often triggered by a familiar smell,  
a sound,  
or even just the feel of a smooth stone.

From the moment I tumbled  
out of my sleeping bag  
and onto the bow of the Mail Boat,  
hands through the cleats  
and legs dangling in the spray,  
I felt the surge of total bliss  
and absolute freedom.

## **The Tide Pool**

The Tide Pool  
Lies cradled in the island's arms.  
My first real job  
Was to get up at dawn  
And row across it to dig clams  
For Beal & Bunker.

I'd hover on the ebb tide  
Over the "lobster holes",  
Where they hid in caves  
Carved with their tails  
In the alluvial clay,  
Only claw tips and antennae showing.

Ospreys and Eagles swooped  
Out of huge nests in the Marsh to feed.  
Sunsets were often brilliant  
In a color we called "sky-blue-pink"  
When rain was coming.

We'd watch the Moon rise  
Over the Eastern Way,  
Then float silently on the flood tide  
Into the Pool- swept along as fast  
As a Whitehall skiff could be rowed.

Seals spy-hopped in the moonbeams,  
So close we could hear them breathing  
And even smell them.

Meteor showers of mackerel  
Chased herring through the phosphorescence  
Gleaming in the dark of the August moon.

## **The Back Shore**

The Back Shore was another world.  
I remember camping  
With Dad on Mermaid's Egg Beach,  
Where the pink granite "eggs"  
Rolled smooth in the surf,  
And finding sunspots on a foggy rosehip Sun  
one Solar Max.

At night we'd sit by a driftwood fire  
And see our ghosts laughing behind us  
In the "thicka fog."

I remember the huge crash  
Of surf on Bunker Head  
From an offshore hurricane,  
And the full moon darting  
Out of the cloud massif  
As it swept off to Nova Scotia.

In October massed rafts of sea-ducks  
Would stretch to the far horizon, resting.  
One after another would flap up and sink back,  
Until suddenly they all rose up in unison  
And flew south-  
On the great miracle of migration.

## **The Heath**

The Great Heath  
Was the island's Heart of Darkness,  
Where the Old-timers said a whole team of oxen  
Had sunk out of sight.  
We ventured out on it one gray afternoon.  
As the fog snuck in on us,  
It suddenly looked the same  
In every direction,

Bordered by stunted skunk pines  
Gradually getting larger,  
As they rose out of the nacreous acid bog.  
We wandered for hours and emerged shaking.

Years later Alison, a crusty old Islander,  
Showed us tiny fragile pink orchids  
And other minute treasures  
Hiding among the pitcher plants and sundew.

The Island was only 800 acres and inhabited,  
But it loomed enormous.  
Somehow the close contact  
With wild plant and animal beings,  
The intensity of the elements, the stillness-  
My utter absorption in the moment  
flooded me with intense emotions  
Usually associated with nature,  
Even wilderness,  
In a far more primeval sense.

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## **Dolphins Massing**

One lovely lazy summer day,

Off Mount Desert Rock,  
We watched  
The massed pods of dolphins  
Play in the azure skirts  
of the August Sea.

It was a secret Ritual  
of their animal Being  
I had never heard of-  
As primitive and stirring  
as the annual arrival  
of the Porcupine Caribou  
To deliver their Young  
on the Arctic Coastal Plain.

They stretched,  
like the puffed Rice Clouds  
in a painting  
by Georgia O'Keefe-  
All the way  
to the far Horizon.

I knew that by Morning  
They'd be gone-  
Like the massed rafts  
Of chortling ducks  
We see resting  
Off the Back Shore,  
When October sidles down  
From Labrador.

They float and sleep  
In the long twinkling Haze  
of a late October Afternoon.  
Then, one after another,  
they spy hop up  
And then settle back-  
Until all at once,  
The energy of Instinct  
Becoming uncontainable,  
They surge up and fly as One  
Into the crepuscular Rays  
Of the setting Sun-  
Down the Southern Flyways.

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## A Walk in the Clouds

Out of my little window  
I climb the moonbeam stairs,  
Touching the little star's shadows  
as they dance in pairs.

Night owls stare at the musky sky,

Craning their necks in silent rows  
Amazed to see me floating by  
Without my clothes.

All around my tiny town  
people snuggle in peaceful homes,  
While fluffy snow drifts down,  
In their miniature glass domes.

High above Earth's filmy shrouds  
I wave to my friends below,  
Stirring the moon be-dappled clouds  
With my big toe.

Then glowing like a speck of light  
In the Universe's sea of foam  
I float on my back- a tethered kite-  
And reel myself back home.

*-Paul Liebow, after Paul Petrie*

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## **Don Juan's Land**

This is a land of mystic powers,  
Controlled fury, and strange flowers,  
Where death stalks always at your back,  
Rustling down each stony crack.

Here all good men are glowing eggs,  
And cacti walk on little legs.  
A crow may be someone you knew,  
And Coyote plays sly tricks on you.

Old men float like astronauts in space-  
Only enchanted tentacles of grace  
Holding their bellies to the ground-  
And laugh in your face as they come down.

But a warrior must always be on guard,  
And every step in life is hard.  
Mushroom spirits rule a mineral World,  
And men's minds like dry grass twirl.

Here one day, on some high eagle's perch,  
You'll dance your last dance on this Earth-  
Your soul like smoke in rainbows swirls  
Down through the crack between the worlds.

But if you follow the Path with Heart,  
Your mind and soul will never part.  
Eternal springtime's golden showers,  
Will bring an infinity of living flowers.

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## CRANBERRY MAGIC NIGHTS

Come walk with me in misty Time,  
On Cranberry Isle by the Shining Sea.  
The everyday World will morph sublime-  
A spotty dog dancing down a path of mine.

Mushrooms dance in the moonlit breeze.  
Ferns nod in other-worldly knowing.  
Wood sprites gather round our knees,  
Guide our ghostly green eyed going.

Talking deer lie under breathing trees,  
Sipping night nectar from the leaves.  
Painted birds sway and dance in lines-  
Twittering secrets in nursery rhymes.

A mossy patch on a fallen tree  
Is as strange as any flower  
In Rousseau's jungle bower-  
*Infinity lives in a grain of sand-  
And Eternity in an hour.*

We are two flickering lights on a *Wine Dark Sea*-  
Melded minds wading barefoot in reality.  
Our souls drift in crystal clear Tranquility-  
The World evolves into the Universal "We".

So sit with me in the interstice  
Of Silence and slow Time,  
Wade barefoot in Reality,  
On Cranberry Isle by the Shining sea.

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## High Dry Days of Summer

Today was one of those high dry  
Days on the Maine Coast,  
When Summer holds its breath,  
Neither early, nor late,  
And everything is breezy  
In blue and white,  
On the cusp of the Season.

The thin cirro-stratus clouds  
Flowered in lacy brush strokes  
Painted from West to East-  
More likely to resemble some  
Of God's Creatures than others.

Some feathered into giant birds  
With long tails and twisted beaks.

Others formed fierce fiery dragons-  
Lashing tails and gnashing snouts.  
Others were wispy mystical goldfish,  
Puffing themselves up as they breathed.  
And all had big and swirly eyes.

Sometimes on these lazy days  
One beast will briefly  
Flash in Quetzalquatl green-  
And yellow and red and  
Blue, and indigo, and violet-  
Shine from deep inside-  
Numinous skeletons revealed-  
If the ice crystals line up just right,  
And the clouds are  
Just the right thickness  
And angulation from the sun-  
As they were today.

At sunset the animalcules went  
Through the entire rainbow again-  
From yellow to gold-  
To red and mauve-  
To violet and indigo.  
Then gray and black-  
This time lit from the outside.  
As the stars blinked on,  
One by one,  
Over the hills of Acadia.

Now the sky is clear and pure,  
And the Milky Way sprawls  
Like those same clouds  
Over our heads-  
This time from North to South,  
Like The Lost Angels'  
Trail of Tears-  
And All is Right with the World.

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## Mantle Peace

Our fireplace mantle on Great Cranberry Island  
Tells a rich Family story- without any words.  
A smallish piece of driftwood knot hole  
Lies in the center- with pointed crocodile snout  
And a large dark whirlpool eye looking to the right.  
The old spruce root whorls curl  
Back on the body playfully-  
Like the lacy sky monsters in cirrus clouds  
We watch together- on High Dry Summer days  
That presage rain coming in from the South.

Dried sea lavender bunches form a cockaded hat,  
And stegosaurus plates flopping down his spine.  
On both sides small grey cork  
Sea ducks with wooden heads,  
Carved by one of the gnarly old  
Cranberry Islanders of Yore,  
Are looking at him, and Us.

Above hangs an antique wooden plaque,  
Given to my grandfather, Everton Gott,  
By Mr. Tyson, a man he served  
As Captain and Guide for a Generation.  
Carved game birds lie over the gun that got them.  
A leather frilled game bag dangles gracefully.

There is an old metal Indian Head  
That my brother "liberated" from  
A car's hood in our back field  
Before it rusted into Forever.

A tiny driftwood tree root  
Stands at an angle waving at us  
Like an octopus looking up from his dinner,  
On the bottom of the sea.

To the right is a dark brown woodcut,  
Given to my Dad for taking  
Care of a little girl's cut foot,  
By her father who carved it-  
Giant waves break on a headland that has to be  
The Rockbound Point on the Back Shore-  
Which is the Holy Grail of my Life.

On the near end is a woodcut  
Of deer walking through the Forest edge  
Given in respect by Armin Hemberger  
Who illustrated my Dad's pathology books  
Before computers ruled the publishing World.

On the far right is a photo  
I always introduce to people  
As me and my two Brothers  
And our sweet "Casper, The Friendly Ghost"-  
A mixed breed dog my Dad brought Home  
From the lab after he rearranged  
His Heart's circulation-  
For some scientific study or other.  
People only sometimes notice  
That Rob - not yet born- is a stuffed bear  
That Chuck is holding.

In the fireplace are andirons Uncle Harry gave us after  
Making it possible for us all to be here.  
He made a life selling fine furniture-  
Even embroidered tablecloths for the White House-



After a few of my family escaped  
The concentration camps of Europe,  
With just the clothes on their backs.

On the lower left is a picture Of my Mom  
And my Little Big Man Dad-  
Three sons smiling and towering over Them-  
So proud of their family and the  
House they worked on for years  
To make the Home we all come back to in our Hearts  
Whenever the World gets to be Too Much.

And I will always remember  
Mom's white hair glowing-as she sat in Bright Light  
In the rocking chair just to the right,  
Sewing, knitting, or reading wistfully-  
After my Dad was called away-

Forever.

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## THE MOON

Sometimes the moon comes up slowly,  
A musk-rose blooming on a wine-dark sea.  
Sometimes it's a furious fire-balloon  
Which seems to be chasing me.

Sometimes the moon flies up quickly,  
A little bird just out of my reach.  
Sometimes it hangs like a basket of gold,  
Or ripens slowly like a peach.

Sometimes the moon is a ghost ship  
Sailing softly in silver shroud.  
Sometimes it's hidden completely,  
Like an Angel asleep in a cloud.

Sometimes the moon is a Faberge egg,  
Hiding in a Paisley sky.  
Sometimes it's just the face of a friend,  
Coming over the hill to say "Hi!"

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## Flowers on the Sea at East Moriches

How would I remember her in eternity,  
Were I the one casting flowers into the Sea  
For my own little SEAL baby,  
Lost in the waves at East Moriches?

I'd remember tiny starfish hands  
Clasped in golden balls,

Her head already held high,  
And looking me in the eye  
As she was born into my arms.

And the window seat where we read  
"Goodnight Room and Goodnight Moon"  
And where she said "redlight-redlight"  
When a strange tower appeared  
On the mountain one night.

I'd remember her in storm surge  
And sea smoke on the Back Shore  
Where she played with her cousins  
And found her first fossil-  
The one I'd been looking for  
Most of my life.

And the little bunny in the blue dress  
That she tucked in my arms  
To keep me safe each night  
In the strange hospital,  
When I was so very sick-  
And that will always watch over me.

And how she loved our Penobscot point,  
A power spot from the Red Paint People  
Where she found the ancient Indian carving,  
And watched the Osprey soar.

And I'd remember that she wrote:  
"If PEACE were a forest,  
We'd all sway together with the trees.  
If PEACE were the fog,  
Trust and friendship  
Would seep into our lives."

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## One Perfect Day With My Friends

Do you remember, my friends,  
That perfect Cranberry day we had?

We ate Mom's breakfast  
In that great East window  
Where the sun comes off the Tide Pool-  
So hot it melted the candle  
In the old cork float.

We played Frisbee on the lawn  
While the tide went out.  
Dad dug clams for us  
With that big square shovel,

And khaki pants from the War,  
And that sweatshirt-  
Hooded over his head  
Like a Japanese pearl diver.  
We cooked our lunch  
In the brilliant blue day  
On Mermaid's Egg Beach,  
Then drifted like the fog  
Toward the Western Way.

We laid with our backs in the moss  
On Great Head and saw the sunset,  
Spattering into rainbows  
As it passed through a gull feather.

That night on the Back Shore  
The fog was thick over a driftwood fire  
And, as we huddled together,  
Our ghosts laughed and joked above us,  
And told us all our old stories  
And said we'd be friends forever.

Coming back we followed only the light  
Of a spotty white dancing dog-  
Slipped by the mysterious Heath,  
Said to be a bottomless pit  
That holds a whole team of oxen.

Home at last, we walked across  
The rounded curve of the lawn  
Felt it breathe like a dog's back,  
And listened to the lapping  
Of invisible waters.

Oct 8, 1990

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## Carl Nelson

Carl was a jolly giant bumble bee,  
In great baggy and painty shorts,  
And a faded yellow and black rugby jersey.  
His knobby knees and gnarly legs  
Were so bent and bowed,  
Like a caricature of a cowboy,  
You could imagine the pollen baskets  
Hanging from his ankles.

His tufted and fluffy white hair  
Twirled up into two twitching antennae,

And the thick hair on his neck and chest  
    Stood out bushy and proud,  
    Like the fur on a magical Disney Elf  
    From Giapetto's Workshop.  
His huge thick beard could become a  
    White Christmas Tree studded  
    With multi-colored paint brushes  
Put there for convenience and forgotten.

He painted the most beautiful birch,  
And spruce, and flowers in fractal planes.  
My dad was a pretty straight scientific fellow,  
    But he loved Carl's painting of  
    Shadblow in the springtime,  
    With it's mass of fluttering petals.  
He lovingly referred gleefully to  
    "Angel in a Pear Tree",  
Long after his speech was forever  
    Garbled by a devastating stroke.

Carl kept a most exquisite garden,  
With flowers more perfectly arranged  
Than any by Monet or Van Gogh or Redon,  
And hustled about at twilight getting greens  
On his way to Mary Rath's for dinner.  
His great stooped shoulders stooped even more  
    After he broke both collarbones  
    In a mugging in Boston.  
Then he moved to the island forever.

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## Victor "Bee" White

Victor was a thin and gnarly man  
Who sat on the sun-bleached Cranberry dock,  
And whittled with strong and ropey hands.  
His stories ruled the Rooster Club-  
Open only to those up at dawn like he was.

Victor had a huge beaked nose and flopping ears  
And he taught my brother the lore of the sea-  
of the Good Old Days in the Grand Banks fishery-  
    Spending weeks on end in an open boat,  
As the treacherous shoals formed and retreated,  
    Sometimes actually trapping them for a time.  
There you literally "learned to fish or cut bait".

They called him "B", not "V", for some odd reason.  
Some said it was because it was his middle initial.  
    Others said it was because  
    He was deathly afraid of bees.

I remember he once burned himself  
When his sleeve caught Fire on a candle.

He asked me to treat him,  
As he wasn't "going to go off the island  
To The Doctor for a little burn"  
I gave him a tetanus shot,  
And dressed his burn for a week.

Then he asked me what he owed me.  
I knew I had to charge him something,  
Or hurt his dignity,  
So I said "five dollars should cover it",  
And of course he paid in cash.  
It's the only money I ever made  
In private practice.

I saw B just before his death  
Lying in great dignity on white hospital sheets-  
Eyes wide open but asleep forever in "coma vigile".  
I remember the incredible leathery lines of his face,  
And how his gorgeous sea blue eyes shown so brightly  
With the transcendent beauty of his sky blue mind.

A few days later, on a stark November day,  
The whole island,  
dressed in black suits from the fifties,  
Came to Church to say goodbye to one of their own.  
Then they walked to the cemetery with him,  
Just as other Islanders had in centuries past.

A very strong sense of community  
Pervaded that noble gathering  
Of everyone in the entire town.

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## When Death Comes

When Death comes sneaking,  
To jump on my chest and  
Thrust his dagger  
Of white light between my eyes;  
When Death comes,  
With bristles and moaning bells;  
When death comes,  
Tinkling like the spring wind  
Upon the Prairie:  
I want to step boldly through  
The crack between the Worlds,  
Knowing already  
What it's going to be like,  
To lift up the edge of the Sky  
And drift forever-  
Cradled in the loving embrace of  
Immaculate white light-  
My spirit floating as free as thistledown

On the dawn wind of space.

I want to look upon all of my life  
As rainbows and thunder,  
And all time as a sunset,  
And see eternity  
As the blinking of God's eye,  
And I will remember  
Each of my friends,  
As rare and as singular  
As a nocturnal flower;  
and each friend's name  
As a fruit picked  
At the peak of ripeness,  
And each of my loved ones  
As an angel  
Fallen preciously to Earth.

And when it's over,  
I want to be able to say:  
"All my life I rode  
The whirlwinds of amazement,  
Taking the whole Universe  
Into my soul-  
I don't want to wonder  
If I have made of my life  
Something useful and real,  
Or find myself  
Frightened and sighing-  
Wondering why I never  
Fully inhaled this amazing World."

*After Mary Oliver*

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## "WORLD ENOUGH AND TIME"

We could spend a lifetime watching the Universe  
Grow from singularity into a luminous egg-  
The strings of Celestial harps vibrate the surety  
Of eleven dimensions of mathematical purity.

We could watch the pinwheel galaxies whirl-  
One hundred billion stars in each one swirl-  
Winking on and off like fireflies-  
Aeons of angel hair twinkling in our eyes.

Or we could just lie in the garden and think-  
Watch the cat sit on the rock, and the osprey soar.  
We could smile as the Sun sets in sky blue pink,  
And the Moon rises over the Back shore.

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## Crystal Blue Creation Sea

Now at last they go Together again-  
Out from under the old spruce tree-  
Over the Crystal Blue Creation Sea.  
Two kindred Spirits hand in hand.

Out over that Selfsame Sanguine Sea,  
Where they watched tattered planes,  
Crash within sight of the runway,  
Limping home from Saipan and Kerjuelen.

The Silver Eagle Sea She sailed, Home from  
Four long Years beyond the Golden Gate  
Until she saw her beaming dad at the station-  
Army Nurse, Officer, and Gentle Woman.

The Strontium Gray Sea over which He flew back-  
From the Atom Scorched Land of the Rising Sun  
Where two cities had just in Devil's Breath died-  
Bringing home a red and blue Obi for his bride.

The Star Spangled Sea we lay by long ago  
After a shining July Fourth summer day.  
Watching for Meteors showering the August Night-  
We saw instead Sputnik's first Crepuscular Flight.

The Azure Dragonfly Sea off La Jolla  
Where they battled and failed in the Fight  
To bring back the words that staggered away  
Like Seasick Sailors on a foggy night.

The Sky Blue Pink Sea at Dawn  
When they come back Home to Sleep  
By the driftwood stump of an Ancient Tree  
Under two stones laid on the sloping Lawn-

A round Red Mermaid's Egg hugs a black slab  
Of Ellsworth Schist in shining layered crystals.

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## "Pink" Stanley

I remember Pink  
As the enormous "old man of the sea",  
Still dragging a huge gray dory  
In over the flats to it's mooring-  
After hauling lobsters by hand  
All day, at well over seventy-  
His great galumphing gate,  
In huge black fisherman's boots,  
As he carried my muddy brother  
In one foggy day-

Stuck clamming in sneakers  
In the primordial ooze of The Pool.

His dory had  
An "outboard engine well"  
In the center,  
Where we watched flounder  
Cruising the bottom  
And polluck swarming  
After the herring brit,  
For so long that,  
When we looked up,  
Phantom fish swam in the sky  
Circling aimlessly above our heads-  
A trick played on us  
By some tiny recess deep in the brain.

I remember his radiantly  
And redundantly wrinkled face,  
The upside down carrot  
Of his bulbous nose,  
Like hundred year old Indians  
In Smithsonian photos.  
Back then I thought  
They called him "Pink"  
Because of his leathery  
Permanently burned red face.  
But it's much more likely  
It was after the "pinky" schooners  
He once sailed as a young man,  
Fishing up and down the coast,  
The ones with their sterns  
Hanging well out over the sea.

And I also remember  
They said this simple fisherman  
Had a stamp collection worth well over  
A hundred thousand dollars-  
Quite a sum in the fifties.  
He once trapped my soccer ball  
Between his feet  
And flipped it forward  
Over his head.  
And he caught it  
Laughing and grinning-  
His eyes gleaming and flashing,  
Like the sun on a following sea.

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## Here Comes my Girl

He followed her back through the Golden Gate,  
When she was still young and spry.



Then told her to take the train from Maine  
To New York to start their new life.

She asked whom he saw  
On the platform that day,  
And he answered  
"Here comes my wife!"

He returned from the Land of the Rising Sun,  
When the great Hiroshima work was done.  
She asked what he brought home for her-  
"A red and blue obi for my bride."

And now she's bent and brittle,  
But her eyes shine like starry Worlds.  
"He'll be waiting for me at Heaven's Gate,  
And he'll say "Here comes my girl!"

*For Carolyn and Averill, my parents*

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## **An Ancient Messenger- From the Allende Strewn Field**

This pin is an Antique-  
Of a different Sort!  
From a few feet away  
This Stone is dull and gray-  
But hold it close up- and  
You will see the Light of a  
Trillion ancient fiery suns.

It was old when we played  
All day in the grass as Children-  
Then watched the Stars wink on,  
One by one, in the crepuscular Sky.  
It was old when Columbus sailed  
And when the Red Paint People  
Camped down by the River.  
It had already fallen to Earth-  
Shattering into a Brief Shower of Stars  
Over the "Allende Strewn Field"-  
When the Ice Age melted and  
Our ancestors wandered down  
Out of the trees,

Blinking and bewildered.

It was already old when Dinosaurs  
Ruled the Earth-  
When the first Breathing Fish  
Walked upon the Land.  
And it was Old even as Life Itself wriggled

Out of the Mathematics of Infinity.  
It danced with our Noble Planets  
Even as they started to gyre and spin-  
And the Sun slowly congealed from  
The burned bones of dying Stars.

It came across the Galaxy  
From an Ancient Star

That burst into dusty tears

After it took its  
Last Breath and collapsed-  
Its nuclear fuel- and its Life- all spent-

From a Family of Magic Stones  
that may even have brought Life with them-  
Sealed in the Dust of a carbonaceous chondrite-  
Amino acids blooming on iron olivine branches-  
Titanium/aluminum oxides and silicates-  
The condensed First Breath the Universe,  
Exhaled just after the Big Bang-  
When strings no longer ruled the universe  
And Up- and Down- Dancing Quarks  
Mated to form the first Atoms and  
The Morning Stars Sang Together.

I give it to You Now-

For safe-keeping.

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## **In Memoriam Dr. Laurel Clark: Astronaut and Physician**

### **Lost on the Columbia Space Shuttle**

#### **"I Want to go to Space"**

When you were a little girl,  
Snuggled with your Mom on the sofa,  
You saw "One small step for a man-  
One giant leap for Mankind!"-  
And Apollo 13 splash down safely  
Because the captain said  
"Let's just work the Problem"- the crew  
Even smart enough to use slide rules-  
To double-check their primitive  
Computers feared damaged by  
Electromagnetic surge from the explosion.

By the iridescent gleam of the silver screen,

You said "I want to go to Space!"

As a woman you had the Right Stuff  
To dance on the Pillar of Fire-  
Your immaculate soul hurled  
Into the infinite wilderness of sky,  
In a shower of stars and foam.  
But in all the Glory of Space,  
Even in the white heat of re-entry-  
All you ever wanted was to  
Just work the problem.

Tens of thousands of volunteers,  
From all across America,  
Searched mountains, and canyons,  
And forests for shredded metal,  
And shredded bodies.  
Your husband Jon among them-  
Crawled on hands and knees,  
Looking for you-  
And your last lost moments-  
In the resurrected crew compartment,  
Sprawled out in a giant hanger.

They put the Shuttle  
Back together again-  
Found the Root Cause-  
So shredded families,  
Including your own,  
Could put shredded souls  
Back together again-  
And lay them to rest forever  
Under sacred green lawns  
All across the Heartland.

He celebrated your memory-  
On the eve of a New Discovery launch.  
He told us of a little blonde boy  
Who had been obsessing for months  
That His Mom would follow Christa's  
Shining Path to the stars,  
And not come home,  
But couldn't remember crying that day-  
When the nation sat stunned as  
Seven Pale Angels  
Rode in formation  
Across a cold West Texas sky.

Then, tears streaming and lips quivering,  
He told us that your son  
Had filled out a school questionnaire  
On his future plans:  
"He wrote 'I want to go to Space' ".  
Then his shoulders quaked

And his voice cracked-  
"He will follow his mother's dreams-  
And my dreams will follow theirs!"

We will all follow those mysterious white lights  
Into the vastness of the Night Ocean.

*After Rumi*

---

## SALMON HOMING

*Praise Be! to The Great Spirit for the rainbow warriors-*  
And the everlasting glory of their journey home.  
Praise Be for twinned parabolas of falling waters  
In their Moonlit leapings in noctilucent Foam.

Praise Be for burbling brooks and chortling streams.  
Where the little ones feed late into twilight  
In sweet waters fulfilling their Maker's dreams,  
They flash and play and grow strong in His sight.

*Praise Be! to the Great Spirit, whose robe warms them*  
And blesses them through dark winter's deep calm- -  
Fluffs them out on a *Blue Norther's* cloud be-decked hem,  
And blesses their journey through the sea's salty balm.

Praise Be for the *Quicksilver Messenger's* star-bedazzled track.  
Their noble mission, coded in DNA's magic rhymes,  
Leads them to feed on the Arctic seas and back,  
Unfurling knowledge stored since the dinosaurs' times.

*Praise Be for one of the fiercest creatures that we know.*  
We'll save them yet from extinction's blackest night-  
To jump again, like the rainbow within a rainbow,  
We last saw gleaming in childhood's perfect light.

*Paul Averill Liebow MD FACEP*  
*Copyright June 2005*

---

## SALMON HOMING II

How do you home at the end of your numbered days,  
Across the great blue Ocean's rolling highways,  
From an Arctic Dreamtime halfway round the Earth,  
To find solace in the waters of your birth?

Is it the polarized light of the Sun that lies  
Deep in the green fire of your eyes?  
Or the dappled Moon that proudly smiles  
Down on all your journey's driven miles?

Is it the lateral lines paired on your sides  
That sing your magnetic song across the tides?  
Or do the angled rays of the crepuscular Sun  
Tell you that your journey's almost done?

What then is the final mystery guide  
That turns you into the Penobscot's southward glide?  
Is it Orion walking slowly up the sky,  
After the weeping Pleiades, you set your compass by?

And what are the ancient shining dreams  
That drive you upriver to your natal streams?  
Is it the deeper graveled coolness flowing forth  
From more deeply shaded branches in the North?

The mineral smell of a seeping ledge or musky tree,  
Structural memories dormant in your brain from infancy,  
Which your deep forebrain plays back to you in reverse,  
To Guide you back through your once and future Universe?

May you swim in synch with your river and ocean tribes-  
Scintillate forever in shimmering Auroral vibes!  
We'll help you once again set down your genetic load-  
Written so deeply in DNA's magic chromosomal code.

*Paul Averill Liebow MD FACEP*  
*Copyright October 2007*

---

## "Bunny"

Under the faraway eyes of Abe Lincoln,  
I tiptoed at last, alone in October-  
Into the Valley of the Shadow of Death-  
By the Black Wall, where millions come,  
And the loudest shout is a whisper.

On every stone, shining in the Moonlight,  
Were little spiders,  
Rappelling down silken cords  
To protect the fallen soldiers  
Who live in the nacreous gleam.

Little spider spirits were hanging,  
like "Strange Fruit" on silken crosses,  
To honor the heroes who jumped  
From the Jolly Green Giants,  
Each one yelling "I'm Spartacus!"  
Into the face of the furious Sun.

As I flew home past the Washington Monument,  
Over the black sword plowed in the Earth  
Like a crashed Stealth Bomber,  
I was glad I had touched his name-

Even though I didn't really know him,  
but only knew of him-  
That his family still loved him,  
And they still call him "Bunny".

**In memory of US Army First Lieutenant Griffith Bronson Bedworth  
Panel 31E Row 009  
from Woodbridge, Connecticut,  
whose helicopter went down,  
in the service of his country,  
on November 30, 1967.**

*Paul Averill Liebow MD FACEP  
Bucksport, Maine 12/30/03*

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## **THE WALL - 1**

Some of us see God sitting for Eternity,  
With Herald Angels, on a golden throne,  
cradling and bathing us in white light,  
As we tumble toward the end of a dark tunnel.

Others see The Great Spirit everywhere,  
Whispering in gentle breezes and moaning bells,  
Or singing the Universe into Being -  
From a Singularity to the end of Time.

I see a God swathed in fire and smoke,  
And standing proudly and saluting,  
Behind a long black shining Door,  
Carved into the brilliant green lawn  
At the feet of Abe Lincoln.

We bring our flags and our flowers  
To parades and graves all across the Heartland,  
But we bring our poems, and our letters,  
And our tears to the Wall of Names.

Some children who miss their fathers -  
Who never even saw them -  
Talk to them for the first time  
There in the Moonlight.

And parents who can only see their sons  
Standing silently just down the hall,  
Near their rooms with their trophies and teddies,  
Touch their cheeks, and whisper to them  
Through their names carved in black granite.

Some Parents cannot even go to the Wall,  
But their son's buddies will find them,  
Down through the years,  
Just to tell them that -

Even though they died in a stinking jungle -  
They didn't die alone.

It's a place so Sacred that it's even right  
For a woman to tell her first Sweetheart  
She still loves him - and that she's  
Married and happy again.

And now we come by the millions,  
From a nation who once jeered and spat on them,  
To respect, and honor, and love them,  
And thank them -  
For doing what they had to do.

We're all just smoke on the wind,  
Dew on the petal waiting to fall.  
We're all just moonbeams on the water,  
Looking for our names on The Wall.

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In honor of my parents who served in WWII

***Averill Abraham Liebow:***

Lieutenant Colonel in the US Army Medical Corps, who went to study the effects of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima and published his personal diary twenty years later as "Encounter with Disaster".

***Carolyn Gott Liebow:***

Captain in the US Army Medical Corps, who served her country as a nurse in the Pacific Theater, so somebody's son would not have to die alone.

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## THE WALL - 2

I never went to Viet Nam,  
had no dear friends  
lost forever in the steaming jungle.  
So, why do I cry whenever I see  
The long black shining Wall  
Of The Memorial that never sleeps?

Why do I cry for its eternal flames,  
the honor guard in tattered battle clothes -  
bronze lions of a million man army -  
who stand there always on the lawn,  
to guard and honor their sleeping brothers?

Why do I cry when I see the names -  
and the people touching and rubbing the names -  
and the people peering through their reflections  
looking for their lost ones,  
who sit among the stars?

And why do I always think

of my dear departed Dad,  
who fought so hard to find the words  
which staggered off like seasick sailors  
into a starless night?

He was the little Jewish boy,  
in knit cap and short pants,  
hands held high  
on the way to the death camps.

And I'm the little American boy,  
in knit cap and short pants,  
saluting a rider-less horse  
that dances on a gray November day.

I know it now - The flags and the flowers,  
and the pictures and the letters,  
and the poems stuffed in the cracks  
are the words of love I hadn't said,  
and the tears I couldn't find,  
when my dear Father died.

And that is why I'll always cry!

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## **Columbus Day Walk on Great Cranberry Island**

First to God's Pocket at Dawn's first gleaming,  
Where mountains on water lie quietly dreaming.  
Then to Great Head where fish schools are teeming  
Under mackerel clouds of gulls hysterical screaming:

By The Great Heath's soft green seething  
Over orchids, pitcher plants, and sundew breathing.  
There a miniature cat spruce forest is growing-  
Lightening bugs later and foxfire glowing.

Then in late afternoon Mermaids' Egg beach,  
Where sunspots smolder on a rosehip sun  
Floating in smoked turquoise sky. The day is done  
As the fog scuds in low on Eggemoggin Reach:



Bunker Head where black and red rocks are dancing-  
Seals in wave-windows- one eye at the surf glancing-  
To Deadman's Point where the whalebones bleached  
And a shipload of coal came for all, when it breeched:

On around the cove to Thrumcap, timed just right  
To see a glorious Moon rise by Baker's Island Light-  
In layered orange clouds and splintered twilight-  
A carrot-upside-down cake on the edge of night.

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## The Amazing Grace of Being Alive

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### Tumbling Men

A young man with a Perfect Life  
Kisses his wife Goodbye-  
Tells her to give the kids a great big hug-  
Clicks the cell phone off and  
Steps out into the most perfect  
Powder blue September sky.

He is so glad he had looked into  
His little girl's blue deep ocean eyes  
So glad he kissed her doll's forehead for her,  
And promised his little blond boy  
They'd play catch again that afternoon.

He is glad he told his wife to  
Raise the children strong and true,  
To know joy again someday for his sake-  
But to remember his name always

Like women at The Wall  
Who coming to meet first loves again,  
Even with new husbands-  
Married and happy again.

He hears the stones whispering and  
The angels singing as the ground swirls  
Up to take him down the soft  
Tunnel of Great White Light and Peace.

\*\*\*\*\*

Another young man with a Perfect Life  
Is driving home early on the Freeway  
When one of the black smokers bubbles up  
And the Spirit of Fire enters his Soul.

He comes in with The Thousand Mile Stare-  
Waves to his wife and walks into the bathroom.

He comes out with his head shaved  
And tells her he is rejoining his unit.

Half a year and half a World away  
His patrol stops two men in a car,  
Fleeing a house filled with RPGs and IEDs-  
Holds them- waiting for the MPs to show up.

Suddenly they start some mumbling gibberish  
And turn on him simultaneously.  
His finger twitches instinctively  
As it has been trained so well to do.

The entire belt of his M60 is gone in a flash.  
He empties another one into the car,  
kicks out the headlights and tail lights,  
Punches out all the windows-

And spray paints the doors and roof  
"No better friend, No worse enemy!"  
Then the Spirit of Fire leaves.  
He salutes his team,  
and kneels down to pray.

**MAY GOD REST HIS SOUL!!**

---

## **For the Heroes of Oklahoma City 1995**

The Devil's lips screeched and the walls breeched.

His breath blew and the glass shards flew.  
The Devil's hands clapped, supporting beams snapped,  
And His black face ate the Sun.

Rivets spat from His tongue, like shots from a gun.  
And the deadly flames grew, fed a chemical brew.  
Electric cables were slashed, re-bar hashed,  
Concrete slabs smashed, and bodies splashed.

All the babies were entombed  
in their ground floor room,  
Crushed flat on their backs on their naptime mats-

Nine floors collapsed in pan-caked stacks.

But the rescuers rolled before the first death knell tolled,  
And the whole town started to run.  
They Stood Tall at The Wall, where a concrete fall,  
Like a wrecking ball, could crush them all.

They dug with their hands through the deadly sands-  
Beyond engineer's plans, even God's demands.

Cutting torches flashed, as the heroes dashed.  
Diamond drills bit and chewed fiber-optic cable slits.

Then they stopped to listen,

while the sweat glistened,  
For a soft little breath,

on the brink of death.

A paramedic runs with a mother's dying son,  
A Pieta begun under the smoking gun.  
The Captain said "lock him in the rig, and be done!"  
But she wasn't the one, to leave her job undone.

She did just what she was told- but ever so Bold-  
She locked the door and laid on the floor  
And held him tight in the dawn's eerie light,  
While his blood pooled, and his body cooled.

Then the most feared shout:  
From the Scene Commander- "Pull out!  
If the cribbing gives, no one lives-  
And no comfort to the dying gives!"

As the flashlights fade, victims in voids laid,  
Sense the coming of the Shades, as they start to invade.  
Their Worlds start to spin- death spirals of Original Sin.  
But soon he screams, with transfixed grin, "Everybody back in!"

After three days straight, the rescue dogs paced.  
Scent trails were traced but with only Death traces,  
They laid down sad-faced, frozen in place as if disgraced,  
Until live bodies placed, so they could lick warm faces,  
Renewed their Faith in Life over Death in concrete encased.

The devils entrails were impaled on red hot nails,  
His Blackness paled beside our Patriots' tale-  
That rides the rails on into Forever.

"We will never fail!  
We'll All ride to the Very End of the Trail  
To lift Death's Veil from America's Holy Grail.

They all saw God's face in that horrible place,  
felt showered with grace, in His loving embrace,  
And fulfilled His plan to help them stand  
Tall for Our Land- Heroes of The American Clan!

So this is an ode to The Honor Code and the Mother Lode  
Of Good In a World where the awful taste  
Left by Evil's haste, and young lives' waste,  
Has been replaced by God's shining helmet and mace.

© unpublished work  
Paul Averill Liebow MD FACEP

---

## The Origin and Fate of the Universe

I am the Spirit of the Universe-  
Just a tiny bubble in a Singularity-  
A single point of infinite mass and energy-  
Of Being and Nothingness-  
Born screaming out the lonely sea of Eternity-  
Into The Amazing Lightness of Being.  
I am the melody of celestial strings streaming  
As a single thought from the mind of God--

Through His magic hoop of fire,  
To the beating of His cosmic drums  
And the chanting of His Angel's Choir.

I am the congealed first breath the Universe.  
My cries still sing in the subtle variation  
Still living in the cosmic background radiation.  
I raveled out His tiny strings in ten dimensions-  
Then for a few short minutes I raced,  
Accelerating way past the speed of light I traced  
The perfect inflation of Time and Space-  
Creating Dark Energy and Matter in the miasma  
I first stirred up as a quark/gluon plasma.  
Up-and-down-dancing Quarks I mated,  
Strange and charmed quarks I syncopated,  
Then protons, neutrons, and electrons I created.

Then, for a million years in darkness I calculated,  
Then banished dark matter and energy as adumbrated,  
Leaving behind just visible light and matter as fated.  
Hydrogen and Helium atoms in molecular clouds I mated  
Spiraled them into burning furnaces, then waited  
Until The Morning and the Evening Stars Sang Together.

The Universe then was a newborn baby  
Wreathed in all the Splendor He anticipated.  
I watched the first colossal giant stars prance  
Then collapsed them after but the briefest dance-  
To explode as supernovae- their lives well spent-  
In death exhaling great clouds of dusty breath-  
Creating metals meant for Life's first chance,  
Leaving live black holes behind their death,  
Drifting ever closer in a dual event horizon mating dance.

Then started new million-Sun-mass black holes  
Like whirling dervishes spinning-  
Swirling their skirts of stars and space-  
With faces like ten-armed Shivas grinning-  
Juggling smaller star clusters gently up and down-

Great arcs of gas on fire fiercely hurling,  
And rivers of dust gracefully unfurling-  
Into showers of new star generations pearling.  
I watched new galaxies' arms uncurling-  
In joyous celestial ribbon dancing-  
Made the whirling galaxies in ululating veils hang-  
Still echoing God's smile after the Big Bang.

Here and there Life still twinkles on,  
After planets form from gas and meteor scree-  
Sometimes in the shallows of soft warm seas,  
Or floating in clouds of sulfur and ammonia-  
Even in pressurized depths of a planets' deep freeze.  
Everywhere Life still slowly climbs the cliffs of space  
Looking always for life-friendly places  
To live when its' own star inevitably disintegrates.

Yet even now the Great Inflation is returning-  
Mass again starts fleeing itself faster than light.  
Galaxies flying apart someday will no longer  
See even each others' last gasping burning.  
As the wavelengths of light get infinitely longer,  
Entropy gets inevitably and insatiably stronger.  
As the Great Cosmic Acceleration ever quickens,  
The rainbow galaxy themselves will start winking off-  
The event horizons becoming ever more narrow-  
At the tip of space-time's arrow.

Then neighbor stars will wink out one by one.  
Even the neutron stars that now  
Live in the shadows of Earthlike Suns,  
Will Explode into space long after  
All Life's days in the Universe are done.  
Then even matter itself will start untangling  
From electro-magnetism and the  
Strong nuclear force's Fearsome strangling-  
And gravity and the  
Weak nuclear force's gentler dangling.

But my eternally fore-destined dash  
Is but the briefest blessed flash  
Between twin poles of cosmic dreaming-  
The Amazing Lightness of Being streaming  
Back into the Nothingness of a cold dark universe.  
In a google years I'll be born again-  
In quantum entanglement with God's last thought.

Exactly at the appointed hour,  
I'll ravel up God's strings again on  
The tattered sleeves of His End Times  
Then in all the glory of His infinite power,  
I'll smile and once again begin to flower  
As another infinitely tiny bubble of Singularity-  
Born again in quantum entanglement-

With God's next thought- content  
To be just one small part of a charmed quark  
For-destined to live, and die, and live-  
Forever and ever again-  
Beyond comprehension by the minds of men.

---

## A Hug in the Snow

The weatherman on the radio was saying  
"I've never seen it like this before-  
It's blowing sideways  
Outside my window,  
And it's raining, sleet, and snowing-  
All at the same time!"  
And it was.

Somewhere south of Bangor,  
A mother was on her way to see her son  
Come home through the airport from Iraq-  
Six days early, on one hour's notice.  
As the four-wheel drift started,  
She barely had time to scream  
"We're going to crash!",  
As he listened horrified on the cell phone  
A stranger had given him.  
Then the rollover started.

Cars were stopping in both lanes-  
Bangor is in the Great State of Maine.  
Before the first teardrop fell,  
She was on her way again.  
But the giant transport was already  
Waiting in line for take off,  
Steaming like a huge beast  
With flashing red eyes.

All of a sudden, the huge plane  
Turned and came back to the gate.  
Her son walked down the ramp-  
Into the lounge-  
Gave her an enormous three minute hug-  
Turned and saluted the crowd,  
Waved once, and was gone  
Even before the cheering started.

A random act of human kindness-  
The infinite grace of God-  
The New American Patriotism?  
All of the above, and- I believe-  
A single phone call  
From a tall man,  
With a huge gun

In his shoulder holster,  
Who watches everything quietly,  
And truly believes his job is  
"To Protect and Serve",  
And whose name will be a secret  
Held deep in my soul,  
Until I know it's OK for him-  
If we all know.

---

## Common Valor in Small Town Maine EMS

The People of the Dawn breathe deeply as one,  
Cirled together to Gather Peace and Strength  
from the Great Spirit- before the seatbelts latch,  
The red lights flash, and the Sirens scream!

Every EMS crew takes the same deep breath  
Of Hope, Reverence, and Honor, and  
Prays for the Knowledge, the ability,  
And the kindness to meet daunting Tasks ahead.

And all know Honor and Duty require Actions-  
Feelings- Reverence- long after their First Response.  
Many times our best efforts are just not enough,  
But what we do then may be even more crucial.

*"Thank you! THANK you! THANK YOU!"*

A woman summoned home by a fireman  
Who found her in town on a windy spring day  
Found the Firemen lining her driveway,  
Her "Dream of a Life" home smoldering.  
She instantly knew her dogs were dead.

The Firefighters stayed lined up quietly as the  
Bodies were brought out tenderly by the Marshals.  
Her memory is the same memory we all have,  
Of human remains coming up out of Ground Zero-

Our national memory of total silence ringing out  
As each flag-draped ambulance rose seven stories  
Out of "The Pit", even only with pieces of loved ones -  
Through saluting ranks of FDNY Fire-Fighters  
Standing stiffly at attention all along the ramp-

And five thousand firefighters from all over  
North America mustered at attention in Worcester  
Saluting brothers lost in a warehouse looking for  
Homeless people rumored to be inside, but long gone.

And thirty thousand fire fighters from all over the World  
Who came after 9/11, and lined the streets, looking  
"Parade Right" or "Parade Left" toward Ground Zero,

As bagpipes skirled funeral after funeral past them.

*"Thank you! THANK you! THANK YOU!"*

*"I whole-heartedly, with what is left of it,  
Thank and honor you for your Skill,  
Professionalism, and Compassion  
For what you do."*

*"It seems little to say 'Thank you' when  
So much has been given.  
But it is all I have right now.  
Thank you. THANK you. THANK YOU."*

And then they buried her dogs!!

*Paul Averill Liebow*

---

## **We are Proud Hardworking Americans**

We are proud hardworking Americans,  
And we will never give up-  
Until we bring warmth and light  
To the bottom of the deepest mine-  
Because someone might still  
Lie shivering in the dark-  
Until the little yellow basket comes up  
Bulging with the last man-  
Cold and wet, blinking and bewildered-  
Still proudly wearing his hard hat,  
Burned out headlamp, and American Flag-  
And asking nonchalantly  
"What took you so long?"

We are proud hardworking Americans,  
And we will never give up-  
Even though the stones  
Are already whispering  
"I'll be waiting for you in Heaven".

We are proud hardworking Americans,  
And we will never give up-  
Even though we huddle in the back  
Of a doomed plane-  
Drawing our last play on the floor-  
With our loved ones listening,  
Our hearts pounding,  
And the sweat glistening-  
And our souls still playing in  
The sandlots of the seventh grade-  
Never knowing "Let's roll" will be  
Remembered in history like Iwo Jima  
And "The Charge of the Light Brigade".



We are proud hardworking Americans  
And we will never give up-  
Until the last passenger  
Crawls forward on hands and knees  
To bring the plane down-  
So some child's Mom or Dad  
Will be home for dinner.

We are proud hardworking Americans-  
And we will never give up  
Until the last flag-draped stretcher  
Comes by the saluting firefighters-  
And Amazing Grace skirls for the last time  
Down the canyon-lands of The City.

We are proud hardworking Americans-  
And we will never give up-  
Until the last load of concrete  
And twisted steel is hauled away,  
And the last lost keepsake  
Comes home to rest at last-  
Until the last man sweeps  
The last shovel-full  
Of burned bones and memories  
From the shining cement slab  
At the bottom of The Pit,  
On Hallowed Ground!

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## Four Cats

### Katerina

Katerina is our very sexy "girlie-cat"-  
long legs and hips swiveling down the runway,  
Sashaying back and forth on the lip of the sink.  
Meowing plaintively to have the water run slowly  
For her in the late afternoon sun---  
She drinks from her own private *Gravity's Rainbow*.  
She'll sleep in any and every cozy enclosure---  
Towels, clothes piles, a shopping bag, an old drawer,  
A box of sweets---even her own bed sometimes!  
On lazy late summer days we just call her Katrina.  
A very private little kittie often off by herself.

### Charlie

Charlie is our "Flying Wallenda" with ADHD---  
Pinched little face with *the thousand mile stare*---  
Who twirls round and round on your lap---  
Up and down on your chest, back and forth---

No matter how calmly you stroke him.  
If you are laughing or talking on the phone,  
He starts tiptoeing through family pictures,  
blown glass ornaments, and other family treasures.  
Or jumps from beam to beam---tightrope walking  
In our open high-pitched kitchen ceiling.  
We don't dare speak to him up there- "idiot",  
but climbing up our fragile four foot jade tree  
He is "**No Charles!!**" - squirted with a dose of water.  
He's also a "savant" who can open any latched door-  
With a bang and a thump, like a miniature explosive,  
He now works furiously on round brass door knobs.

## Mowgli

**Mowgli** is "Mr. Briefcase Man", walking purposefully  
Around the house on a highly focused search for mice.  
"**The Mooch**" comes from a proud race of guardian cats-  
lineage traced back to Sixteenth Century British manors-  
Explaining his taste for lettuce, oatmeal, and popcorn.  
He won't look over at you when on his "business".  
But is also most curious about human's business-  
He loves to jump up on the computer keyboard  
To render assistance with finer points of style,  
Or rub back and forth between your legs,  
While you sit on "The Throne" in the bathroom.  
He sleeps soundly on the far edge of the waterbed--  
Just beyond Mom's feet, until she first stirs.  
Then he comes purring up to sit on her chest-  
To help her with her asthma.

## Leo

Leo is the Philosopher King of the group.  
He sits there very quietly, with perfect posture,  
In *his best bib and tucker*, always thinking deeply  
Stray cats meandering through the neighborhood,  
Just as he had once done.  
The others just mill around aimlessly-  
Awaiting orders from their Leader.  
Leo was a "walk-on"---as they say of a young man  
"too small" for high school football ---but who grows late.  
We found him one warm spring day as a little kitten  
Bouncing out and down from under the car's hood.  
He was wearing the cutest little hand-knit collar---  
But was still most probably a "drop off"  
No owner after numerous store signs, and columns.  
He commands such respect, we often call him **Mr. Leo**.  
He sits on your chest - chin out to be stroked  
purring while his ears are rubbed-  
then falls asleep so peacefully on your chest-  
A comforting little kitty cat prayer shawl.

Who ever said "All Cats are gray in the dark"?

Why do cats think people are gray most of the time?

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## A Sun-Spattered Connecticut Childhood

I remember a sun-spattered Connecticut childhood-  
Moon and star spattered, too!  
In fallow fields and following forests  
I relived Kurosawa's bemused meanderings-  
As though I too were wandering through  
Van Gogh's gorgeous gardens- filming *Fantasia*:

### June

Jumping off the bus on the last day of school,  
Clambering over the big old stone wall next to a  
Huge old overgrown apple tree, onto the lawn-  
Through my ritual "Doorway into Summer."

Raiding Ralph's strawberry garden at night-  
Smashing them up with glee in vanilla ice cream-  
Savoring every stolen bite all the more,  
Even though he would gladly have given them to us.

### July

Parents coming at just the right time with  
Station wagons full of kids for sandlot baseball -  
Driving us to another town and refereeing fairly-  
No complex shenanigans of modern "Little leagues".

Raiding Russ's cherry tomatoes by day-  
Eating until sick, then coming back later for more.  
Sidestepping only a few worms in the raw  
Early sweet yellow corn that stood high in the fields.

### August

Loving the Moon-dark magic of shooting stars  
Sweeping out of the constellation Perseus.  
Wandering over The Hill at night in packs to see  
The "secret" underground Nike missile base.

Seeing the scintillation of fireflies blinking  
On and off like a modern pet scan of the brain-  
Night singing deafeningly with bats and cicadas-  
Louder than any imagined Rousseauian jungle night.

### September

Dunking our hands through huge swarms of bees  
To feed off the fallen old-timey sweet pears from  
A very old tree that was well into laying peacefully  
Back to it's final rest, already at forty-five degrees.

Shaking hickory nuts off the trees just up the road,  
Pounding them open right there with a right-sized rock.  
Eating right from our garden even after the first frost,  
Until the Harvest Moon hugged us with the first freeze.

## October

Raking leaves into huge piles with tunnels and nests  
For hiding- later smelling the in peaceful haze of burning.  
Halloween Trick or Treating around "The Hill"  
In Mom's Army Nurse's officer's uniform- and lipstick!

Getting dunked once by a skunk on Devil's Night,  
Then racing through a living room full of company,  
Naked under a thick towel- "purifying" my body with  
Lemon and tomato juice, and a long hot soapy bath.

## November

Mom waking me up for school in ever deepening  
Morning darkness, and my trying to stay in bed  
Until the bus came by to go around The Hill-  
brushing teeth and throwing clothes on just in time.

Watching Orion chasing the "weeping Pleides"  
Up the star-swept Eastern sky- our "Seven Sisters"-  
Thirteen to Native American brothers and sisters-  
Until campfire cataracts blinded them in old age.

## December

Jumping bravely in the pale late afternoon light  
Off high barn beams into huge mounds of dusty hay-  
Tunneling caves inside- coming home with huge thick  
Black snot treasures to share with brothers, and mothers.

Shoveling the first snows of the season off our  
Long driveway on a hill and loving it!!  
My Dad driving the big old black Pontiac in  
Late at night from the office and admiring my work.

## January

Walking nonchalantly a mile on stiff old skis-  
To go down a small hill with a tiny jump.  
Then slogging home happily in near darkness  
For some homework and a hearty meal.

Shoveling the Three Ponds [now only two ponds] for  
Hockey, and Hill Dill, and Red Rover by flashlight.  
Cooking hot dogs and hamburgers and "schmoors"  
Over bonfires that were often our only warmth.

## February

Seeing a few longer, warmer late winter days  
When my flannel shirt would come off.  
Walking briefly outside even at twenty degrees-  
Waving to my amazed little brothers inside.

My Mom and Dad smiling softly by a fireplace fire,  
Sitting back in big old rocking chairs and quilts,  
Reading back and forth to each other-  
Proof-reading by candle light with the power out.

## March

The first crocuses blooming bravely in black dirt-  
Spring bulbs and huge perennial hollyhock's  
First green stirrings under wet leaves-  
Then bursting into the air on a special morning.

Crying over of our gigantic old cherry tree-  
Flattened one morning after thunder-showers,  
Now unable to Shiny from a big knot-hole to the first branch-  
Out and up huge branches- to stuff myself in June.

## April

Jumping off protruding pines into a yellow sea of blooms  
Huge Forsythia overgrowing an old boundary line-  
Crawling a hundred yards without touching ground.  
Then crawling back through secret tunnels underneath.

Peepers' staccato serenading back and forth to others-  
Secret codes only bats and porpoises could understand.  
A fishing trip with Dad to Sperry Falls to fish the pool  
At the deepest dark fishing hole gashed in the black slate.

## May

Dreaming recurrently each spring of somersaulting down  
A little grassy knoll outside- waking up happy  
On the lawn in early morning light- celebrating my  
Joy at the first thick green un-mowed grass.

Savoring an Indigo snow of cherry and apple blossoms,  
Foretelling future delicious summer face-stuffings.  
Birds bellowing so loud before dawn they'd wake you  
Just like the bat's and cicada's late August screeching:

*THE END AND THE BEGINNING*

Then June came and the great loop closed,  
Only to be repeated again and again-  
A timeless clockwork of events, predictable and safe,  
Years going slowly by- like ships  
Drift-netting on The Inland Waterway.

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**Namaste for Victor**

The island sends me with their love for you,  
Eyes glinting skyblue on white sheets- ICU.  
Calm crystal Tide Pools before Rooster Club met  
Pull your spirit back from the brink even yet.

Such an amazingly thin, strong, and gnarly man-  
Whittling on bleached docks with ropey hands.  
With beaked nose, leather skin, floppy ears  
You worshipped the Sun all your salty years.

A little boy on the shore chose your fate  
To fish the Sea of Life, not sit and cut bait.  
To hunker down on nets for weeks and wait  
Fishing dawn 'til dusk Life's lonely straight.

I leave you now in white sheeted repose  
In the Ocean's love as time's Arrow goes,  
So proud of the star blue life you chose  
On Grand Banks ever-circling windrows.

We'll bless your soul in white church ceremony  
Then walk—all in black suits—to the cemetery.  
Though your eyes mist over in waves foggy lee  
You'll dance forever in the Sun on a following sea.

**Victor White, "B"**

Victor was a thin and gnarly man

Who sat on the sun-bleached Cranberry dock,  
And whittled with strong and ropey hands.  
His stories ruled the Rooster Club-  
Open only to those up at dawn like he was.

Victor had a huge beaked nose and flopping ears  
And he taught my brother the lore of the sea-  
of the Good Old Days in the Grand Banks fishery-  
Spending weeks on end in an open boat,  
As the treacherous shoals formed and retreated,  
Sometimes actually trapping them for a time.  
There you literally "learned to fish or cut bait".

They called him "B", not "V", for some odd reason.  
Some said it was because it was his middle initial.  
Others said it was because  
He was deathly afraid of bees.

I remember he once burned himself  
When his sleeve caught Fire on a candle.  
He asked me to treat him,  
as he wasn't "going to go off the island  
To The Doctor for a little burn".  
I gave him a tetanus shot,  
and dressed his burn for a week.

Then he asked me what he owed me.  
I knew I had to charge him something,  
or hurt his dignity,  
So I said "five dollars should cover it",  
and of course he paid in cash.  
It's the only money I ever made  
in private practice.

I saw B just before his death  
lying in great dignity on white hospital sheets-  
Eyes wide open but asleep forever in "coma vigile".  
I remember the incredible leathery lines of his face,  
and how his gorgeous sea blue eyes shown so brightly  
With the transcendent beauty of his sky blue mind.

A few days later, on a stark November day,  
the whole island dressed in black suits from the fifties  
Came to Church to say goodbye to one of their own.  
Then they walked to the cemetery with him,  
Just as other Islanders had in centuries past.  
A very strong sense of community  
pervaded that noble gathering  
of a whole town.

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## Oscar and Ethyl Wedge

They were quite a dapper couple, back in the 50's!!

Oscar always in an immaculate white captain's jacket—  
With white cap and dark visor—walking at attention  
As he came down weekly to walk his right-of-way  
Across our lawn to his little dock on the "Creek",  
Slightly askew after decades without a resident boat.  
He'd teeter out toward the cold little Stream,  
Right in the little pocket near the double docks,  
Where I always found the biggest clams.

Ethyl was taller, with a large Wedge jaw.  
They were always a very dapper couple,  
Walking close together on the short flat stretch  
That runs up Schoolhouse Hill towards church.  
She was postmistress for many years, behind the  
Traditional little glass doors next to the  
Wood window, which slammed down from on high,  
The moment the mail arrived from the Mail boat.

After Oscar died she'd sit silently and alone,  
Right under the "US Postal Service" sign—  
In the glassed-in porch window abutting the road—  
In that gigantic old house we all knew was haunted.  
She just rocked in her chair in the dark,  
Never once waving to the very same kids  
She happily gave the family mail to that morning.  
Just a face in The Rock thinking about living on  
In a long and winding life without her companion.

Then, miraculously, she met an old retired physician,  
Somewhere on the road one day. They hit it right off—  
Got married and spent the next 5 years laughing  
and traveling the World together.

A very happy ending to a long and winding life.

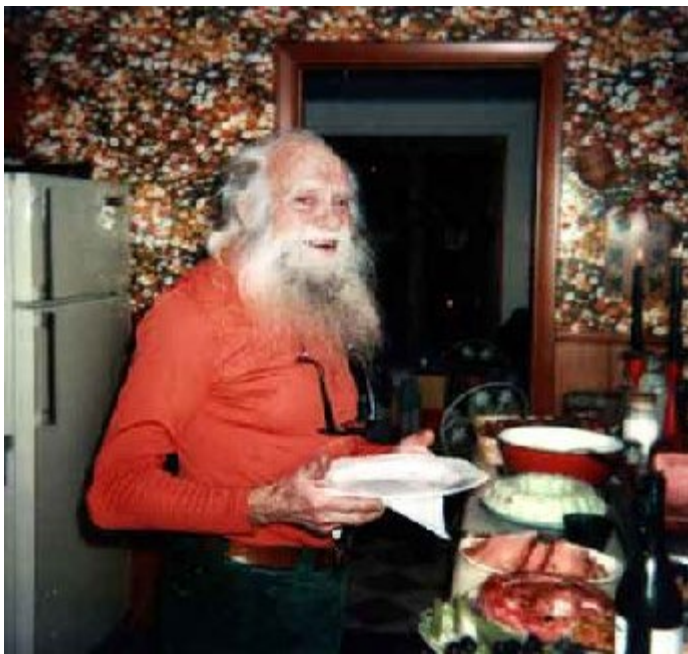


**Carl Nelson**



Carl was a jolly giant bumble bee,  
In great baggy and painty shorts,  
Faded yellow and black rugby jersey.  
His gnarly legs and knobby knees  
Were so bent and bowed,  
Like a caricature of a cowboy,  
You could imagine pollen baskets  
Hanging from his ankles.

His tufted and fluffy white hair  
Twirled up into two twitching antennae.  
Thick hair on his neck and chest  
Stood out bushy and proud,  
Like the fur on a magical Disney Elf  
From Giapetto's Workshop.  
His huge thick beard could become a  
White Christmas Tree studded  
With multi-colored paint brushes  
Put there for convenience and forgotten.



He painted the most beautiful birch,  
Spruce, and flowers in fractal planes.  
Dad was a pretty straight scientific fellow,  
But he loved Carl's painting of  
Shadblow in the springtime,  
With it's mass of fluttering petals.  
He lovingly referred gleefully to  
"Angel in a Pear Tree",  
Long after his speech was forever  
Garbled by a devastating stroke.



Carl kept a most exquisite garden,  
With flowers more perfectly arranged  
Than any by Monet or Van Gogh or Redon.  
He bustled about at twilight getting greens  
On his way to Mary Rath's for dinner.  
His great stooped shoulders stooped even more  
After he broke both collarbones  
In a mugging in Boston.  
Then he moved to the island forever.



## **Back Shore Walk on Cranberry Island**

Come on! Let's drive through the night,  
With Sarah as snug in her sleeping bag  
As down cuddled up in a milkweed pod.  
For a last Back Shore walk in early light:

First to God's Pocket at dawn's early gleaming,  
Where mountains on water lie quietly dreaming.  
Then to Great Head— fish schools teeming-  
Mackerel cloud skies- gulls hysterically screaming:

By The Great Heath's soft green seething-  
Orchids, pitcher plants, and sundew breathing.  
There a miniature cat spruce forest is growing-  
Lightening bugs later- and foxfire glowing.

Late afternoon haze at "Mermaids' Egg Beach",  
Where sunspots smolder on a rose hip sun  
Floating in smoked turquoise sky. Day is done  
As fog scuds in low on Eggmoggin Reach:

Bunker Head where black and red rocks are dancing-  
Seals swim in wave-windows- eyes through surf glancing-  
Deadman's Point where the whalebones bleached  
And a shipload of coal came for all, when it breched:

Around the back cove to Thrumcap, timed just right  
To see a glorious Moonrise by Baker's Island Light-  
In layered orange clouds and splintered twilight-  
A carrot-upside-down cake on the edge of night.