

# DUENDE

A MOMENTARY BURST  
OF INSPIRATION



BOB HANSON

Enjoy!



Moskva,

BAH <sup>class</sup>

“Every revolution needs fresh poems”

*From The World Will Follow Joy: Turning Madness into Flowers, by Alice Walker © 2014 The New Press.*

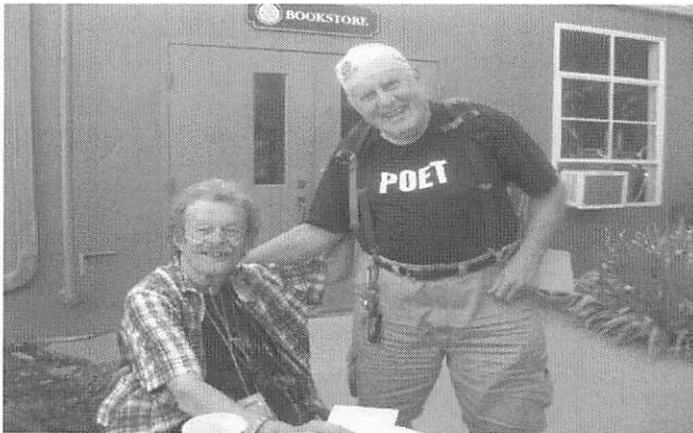
Alice Walker’s poem declares the necessity of the poem and the poet in every age. Now, here is another collection of muses from ko shin, Bob Hanson, during another time of change, violence and a search for peace. Thanks for picking up this volume. I hope you enjoy!



*Ko shin at work...*

This book is in memory of Jack Collom and Joanne Kyger, and in honor and gratitude for my colleagues from Naropa University and the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics. Remembering Bill, and all veterans, especially those who surprise God and struggle with the daemons of war, and my brother in law, The Rev. Stephen Kurth, (RIP!) and all my family and dear friends. A special thanks to Karen, my partner and love these past twenty-four years.

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**Safe landings my friend,**  
the earth and all its creatures are sad.  
Good bye, dear teacher,  
wordsmith, who always shared,  
your spirit will always be with us.  
I will always value your council and  
friendship. Blessings and comfort  
for your family and the community who mourns.

Someday we will meet again, and share a laugh  
and a poem.

Koshin,  
Perhaps  
Opening  
Eternity  
Takes time!  
Jack Collom

*By Bob Koshin Hanson, a perpetual non-credit student in  
Jack's School, sent to  
Naropa, for Jack's Memorial Service, August 20, 2017.*

## Surprising God

How does one surprise God?

I have heard the door or gate is not locked, it is always open.

Every day I think of a vet I knew,  
he told me about the river boat he was on,  
the murky river water, many small boats alongside,  
action all around.

He was a sailor on a ship,  
what the hell was he doing on a river boat, he often asked,  
even now.

Can't remember the name of the river,  
but it was Nam...

You come home from war...

you are different now.

No one seems to know that,  
"but glad your back bro," they say.

Yes, you are home, but then there is the addiction,  
not of killing but of forgetting.

The time comes to report,  
remembering ones service,  
out in the woods, away from it all.

There is that standing at attention, hair and beard trimmed,  
at muster for the last time...

How does one surprise God?

I have heard the door or gate is not locked, it is always open.

## Remembering.....

### It was a van ride from the airport

There were several people heading to Boulder,  
 most to the Summer Writing Program at Naropa.  
 I met Joanne Kyger and her husband,  
 not knowing then her journey  
 and creative gifts and compassion  
 she brought to poets and poetry everywhere.  
 It was not long and I knew who this woman was...

Since 2010 when we rode the same bus  
 to Naropa and back to the airport a week later,  
 we have met and chatted at the school.  
 The lecture she gave one summer on  
 the history of Buddhism coming to the west  
 I will never forget.

Now, this sweet, revolutionary spirit  
 is musing with the angels, and  
 the spirits of the universe.  
 Her quiet voice and humor,  
 the conciseness of the paintings of words  
 in her art will be missed but not forgotten.  
 Deep bows, of gratefulness and thanks, sister Joanne,  
 you would not remember me,  
 but you always greeted me and others,  
 as fellow muses and poets.

You are missed, I carry a sadness that motivates,  
 gives tears that fill me, still holding your  
 poetry that heals and strengthens.  
 Blessings on your family and all of us who mourn...

Peace! Compassion! Resistance!**Remembering...**

**Father Stephen Kurth, blessed and received by the Lord!**

We miss you brother Stephen, I miss you...  
I came into your family later,  
lucky to meet your sister again, after many years.  
Remember we were on the Hill together,  
always Oles! Um Ya Ya!

You served the Lord well,  
the people of Poynette and the globe too.  
They love you Fr. Steve, and always will.  
There, sadness will bring healing, we know...as it often  
does.

You cared for folks, all of them.  
You had strong feelings about things  
and never lost a chance to speak how you felt about things.  
I loved that about you  
even though this old Buddhist wrinkled your theology  
sometimes.

I love your sister, Karen, Steve and I know you do too.  
Appreciated the way you wanted to keep all the records  
on births, baptism, and other life events for everyone in the  
family.  
You also loved to be with family as they loved having you  
along.

Now you will share the bread and wine at the table of the  
universe and the Lord.  
Everyone is there, and now so are you, Fr. Steve.  
Rest in Peace Steve!  
Our sadness is not regret, but love, a sadness that moves us,  
tears that fill us, and a spirit of healing and compassion that  
strengthens all.



May the peace that passes all understanding keep us  
 in hope in our mourning,  
 and rest in the promise and peace of the Lord.  
 We love you and miss you deeply, Stephen.

**Out of an explosion comes life abundant**  
*A train of thought as one travels...*

Early morning fog  
 Covers the isle  
 Even though no snow  
 The cattle roam  
 Thousands of years earlier  
 The lava flowed  
 No barrier stopping it  
 The whales dive in early morning sea  
 Azores are alive and well

How does one carry on?  
 Calm, serenity, peace  
 During the neofascist realities elsewhere  
 The cattle roam  
 Milked where they rest  
 Not where they have to go  
 The sea is calm

And us...  
 The terror of these days  
 Uncertainty within a strange certainty  
 The deep bowels of ancient volcanoes  
 The heat of the earth  
 Re-setting the land and human history  
 In moments  
 Often in years  
 A quiet place

Relaxed yet moving  
 A garden  
 Flowers, trees from the world  
 Reminding all  
 Of our interconnectedness

Built on volcanic rock  
 Aware of limitations  
 Standing on a foundation  
 Millions of years in the making  
 Yet in the field of vines  
 They seem to come out ashes as rock  
 No soil as most know it  
 Stone on stone  
 The walls of the vineyards  
 And planting fields

Nothing to hold them together  
 But a stone on a stone on a stone  
 What does this teach community?  
 We only need each other  
 No tricks or laws  
 Just human compassion and interrelatedness  
 The glue of community is the stone  
 Or the person  
 Not a philosophy or religion  
 But acceptance  
 A holding together  
 Rocks of many shapes and sizes  
 Rocks of wonderful hue and form  
 Rocks of wonder and simplicity  
 Community is a pure sense  
 Why not us?

There is interconnectedness  
 That is discovered in travel

Being there  
Why is it, often?  
We begin to wonder how it would be  
To live in this place  
Taking a boat in Venice  
Or walking in Rome  
A vintage Japanese truck in Zambia or the Philippines  
Or a bike in Thailand  
However you go,  
It is a path that does not end  
Only draws you along

Another island, São Miguel  
The more urban of the three  
But wonderful as well  
Walking through the streets  
Going to museums  
Closed on Mondays

We found interesting shops  
Two or three cups of coffee  
The City Gates and the port  
Even though it was raining a bit  
Enjoyable as can be

The world is wondering,  
Watching, worrying  
The craziness of the USA's leadership  
Oh, that I could type the name  
But my fingers won't move that way  
The letters will not print  
John McCain's words echo in my mind  
"That is how dictators get started"

Grateful for the coverage overseas

You hear many other voices  
 Even from CNN International  
 The reality is terrible  
 Dictatorship might be a stretch  
 Yet, is it?  
 What does resistance look like?  
 Where will we resist?  
 The definition of resistance  
 Is the resistance being the refusal  
 To accept or comply?

In Hindi, they talk about overthrowing  
 That which is not accepted or resisted  
 Which will it be?  
 Work it out you say  
 Remember this leader  
 does not know what that means

Dictator  
 Wait and see you wonder  
 Remember  
 That plays into the hands of the dictator  
 He might be dumb  
 But he ain't stupid  
 Nor are his followers  
 As misguided as they are

Wondering  
 Now what?  
 Thinking  
 Where will it begin?

Now the fun begins  
 A day of travel around this beautiful island  
 Then more thought about what resistance  
 Could be

A hot bath will be a place where clarity happens?  
 Who knows  
 Just passed a village  
 Like so many it has a saint  
 The saint takes care of the village  
 And all who live or visit

I think  
 Off the top of my head  
 This is where "religion"  
 And spiritual practice seems  
 Separate

Practice is the key here  
 Yes, belief too  
 But daily or weekly mass  
 A moment a sense of presence  
 Is the foundation of life  
 And the path  
 Could it be  
 That this leans towards a human  
 Oneness in spiritual practice?

(Meditate on this oneness a while)

Sitting along the shore  
 The Atlantic seems to go forever  
 A sea gull  
 Knows her way

From the sea side  
 I can see the mountain's secrets  
 Are covered with clouds  
 But I know its secrets  
 I was on the top yesterday  
 In the clouds

Two lovers  
Sitting on the ledge  
The man is a bit aggressive  
The lady not so sure  
Why can't we be more patient  
With each other?

You wonder  
When you experience another culture  
Why there are walls that separate  
Rather than bridges

The islands are cool  
Separate yet one  
Each a different sound as one is greeted  
And cared for  
But don't we all live on islands  
Or space that once was the sea  
Before it was land?

Grateful for the experience  
Humbled by the graciousness of the people of the Azores  
Driven even more to be part of a diverse  
Culturally and gifted human race

Now, thinking again of resistance  
Overthrow  
Ending the state organized violence  
Liberation  
The plane rumbles on  
To another place of revolution: Boston  
Time for rest  
Need to be ready, right?

*“E um prazer te-lo  
Na nossa Companhia”*

It's a pleasure having you in our company  
A statement on my gluten free meal plate  
And an image of the globe on my hand towel package

Wait a minute  
There are poets everywhere  
Resisters too!  
Blown out of the sea  
Volcanic rock and lava  
Settled by seafarers  
Culture created out of human community  
Tradition steeped in a faith and practice  
Welcoming to us, as sisters and brothers  
Thank you, divine spirits of the universe...

*A stream of consciousness from the AZORES, February  
14 - 24, 2017*



Take in the beauty of this shore for a moment, you need not  
rush  
AZORES, February, 2017



### **Old Trees, Wonderful Friends...**

old cars go putt, putt,  
old houses creak and crack  
old bikes drive kind of hard  
old booze is better than new stuff  
as is cheese, vintage is wonderful, as is wine  
now, old friends never get old  
they just keep being friends

### **Old Poems**

The ones you don't forget  
They seem to stay in the mind and heart  
You think you can find new ones  
The old words feed your soul

Like aged beer or cheese  
Wonderful friendships  
The muses tickle your soul  
And often bring a tear  
*Listen...*

### **The dark night of the soul...**

Could be any night for me  
I walk the same way every evening  
past the deli, dry cleaner,  
and Dollar Store

This night is muggy and hot  
Maybe I was slower than usual  
A voice spoke,

“Hey brother, got some cash?”

I ignored it at first  
Then he stepped in front of me  
Grabbed my arm  
Moved me around

“Cash brother,” he said in a louder tone  
He was nervous  
Maybe he had a gun, sweat rolled down his forehead

Not sure what moved me but I stopped  
Looked right into his frightened eyes  
“What’s up brother,” I said in return

I think he forgot his role and answered,  
“Not much, need some bread”  
Then he stood up and started acting in charge again...  
“Let’s talk a bit,” I said  
There was a bus bench just to his right...  
I sat down, even though he still had his hand on my arm...  
“Sit down son,” I said to him  
He sat down, almost relieved it had not gone further  
I had forty in my pocket  
“Tell me about yourself...” I asked him

We talked, it seemed a long time  
 You know the story  
 Sad but true  
 No hope, no dreams  
 Finally, I said, "Here is forty dollars son, get food for your  
 family, I walk this path many times a week, let's meet  
 again and see if we can work some things out"  
 He took the cash, stuck it in his pocket, where I saw the  
 gun handle, mumbled thanks  
 And ran... Who knows we might meet again, but if not, for  
 a few minutes  
 we both experienced care, compassion, something more  
 than fear...  
*(fiction, yet true...what is your story of fear and  
 compassion?)*

## **Fences**

As one drives the country roads  
 The old wooden fences, broken, but surrounded  
 by the weeds and plants of time, yet looking strong  
 No longer holding in or keeping out...

And then there are the stones fences  
 They seem so strong, go way back,  
 with an iron gate, here or there...

Often, I see wire fences, meant to keep humans in  
 A warehousing feeling, once you enter  
 The sound of the gates closing often sticks in your mind

Fences that keep in and stop from getting out  
 We live in a time where there are fears that often  
 lead us to believe we need more fences,  
 keep those who are different, look different,

Speak differently, beware it is fear not security that drives  
this thought...

We want free range chickens, wild animals  
to fill our tables and stomachs, yet we build fences...  
Hey, I got it!  
How about a bridge, building bridges not fences?

**For me, it was a small village in South Africa**

The huts were what I would call road side houses  
Built with love, with hope, with whatever they found along  
the road  
Beautiful, small, dirt floor homes...

Yet every spring a flooded area separated this small  
village...

One large pipe is all that being needed  
Sister city relations called us to this village  
Work crews, health checks, visiting of schools,  
Government offices...a bridge was created,  
A sense of healing after troubled times, and hope of the  
future...

Today we are confused  
I am sad as I know you are, and a bit fearful, uncertain...  
We pray for those who went to dinner or a concert  
and are no longer with their loved ones...  
The attacks in Paris, Beirut and Baghdad  
A traumatic time for all human beings  
A time for bridges  
A time for compassion  
A time for healing  
A time for peace  
A time for hope

*“That the self advances and confirms the ten thousand things / is called delusion; / That the ten thousand things advance and confirms the self / is called enlightenment.”-*

**Dogen Zenji, Wandering Clouds**

### **A Song to the Spirit...**

*(an ode to Naropa)*

To what you ask?  
Listen with me...

The mountains are showing their personalities. Some days they are out in full bloom, others they sleep in as I see it, behind the clouds, mist, and fog.

The wonder of the muse, sometimes clear and intentional, often, a strange kind of silence or whisper, or, nothing, it seems.

No fog here, Jack’s School, even when it rains, the winds of transformation  
Symbiosis, Braided Rivers, coming together as one yet all.

My first work shop here we read Lorca’s “duende” essay, compared to *canto jondo*, dancing, or a bull fight.

Muses that expose the thistles and the beauty of this moment, all moments...  
*Duen de casa*, master of the house both a playful hobgoblin, master of this space, breaking plates, making noise, and the quick steps of flamenco.

Naropa was a great teacher whose spirit continues, even on  
Arapahoe, here in you, in me.

The six yogas that call forth the muses in the moment  
interconnected with all.

I leave after summer visit, but I am always here, there are  
few places we can say that of on the path.

Grateful, blessed, awakened, yet napping, I wondered last  
summer will I be back?

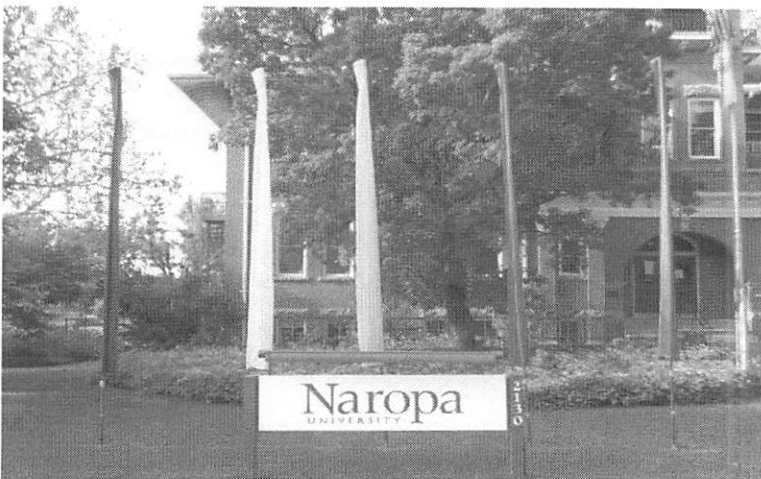
I am wondering again.

It doesn't matter.

The intense light of Naropa guides, enlightens if we accept  
"duende," a strange acceptance.

Creating the breath, a poem, an image, the dance, the song.

That's the path, no place, no name, no university, just  
being...the light, deep bows to the truth.



*The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us.” Acts 11:12*

### **Old Peter in early times struggled with the change...**

What a week, you shared with me the pain and joy of your lives...

A young adult deciding to surprise God, by herself in her dorm room...

A young baby leaving her family when someone abused her to death...

The tragedies of Houston, Kumamoto in Japan and Equador, the ring of fire

around the Pacific Ocean, Bali, Japan, and now SA

The earth crying out in pain as many remain in denial that humans had anything to do with it...

Two dreams

One about inclusion and universality

One about presence, the presence of the Spirit and Hope

And you and I can sit

Yes, all of us sometimes,

we just refuse to see the data, the stories, the reality of our history,

of our treatment of people, even those we love...

The verse I began this with is one we need to memorize, repeat

Live, as we practice our faith...

Yes, we have a choice, be safe or be real

Look the other way or face reality in the face, our own and others

Not in judgement but as our Gospel reminds us so clearly,

we are known by our love, not prejudices or half-truths that  
keep us separated

We are known by our love of one another, of all others,  
because we are all loved of the Divine

### **It's amazing**

How quickly the winter road side in forest turns  
to lush colors of green and brown

The cool summer morning

The Sandhill Cranes speaking loudly as they always do

I'm sure I heard the words Bernie and Trump in their  
conversation

Could that be?

But it was the teenage white tails

Two of them wrestling in the ditch as I came down the road

Another standing to my right making sure I wasn't messing  
with them.

Then they ran off into the woods and disappeared

In the background, the cranes continue their conversation

As they walk slowly across the road in front of me

I wonder sometimes if enlightenment

isn't just being present

and seeing and hearing what is around you

Often, we miss the gifts of nature, whether in the  
countryside or the city





### **What is your Totem?**

The earth gives each of us a Totem  
A symbol of all  
Of being interconnected to all beings  
Riding through the woods  
The Sandhill Crane  
The buck chasing his doe  
The fat turkeys with their families  
The fish, the eagle, and more

Calling us  
 To a quietness  
 A mindfulness  
 A peace  
 Memories  
 The moment  
 All life!

**It seems we are always called back to the well...**

Who is at the well?  
 Those who somehow lead you and me on a path  
 Yes, back to the well,  
 St. Olaf, Luther Seminary,  
 what did we learn about being pastors?  
 Or was it the side jobs, directing choirs, helping  
 with education and internship that might have been the real  
 training

Came back early from Long Island internship...  
 Working in migrant camps in Door County  
 Sneaking into the camps at night  
 to work with the families, with games, scripture,  
 conversation, and care.  
 Maybe the seed was planted there for me, but the poverty,  
 the nastiness of the cherry farmers  
 awakened something in my soul

I have been to the well, the place before all this religious  
 stuff came to be  
 Where the spirit of human kind developed  
 Through family, clan, community and nation,  
 through the earth, the four directions, the bode tree, and the  
 cross

Yes, Luther was a beginning, but only that...

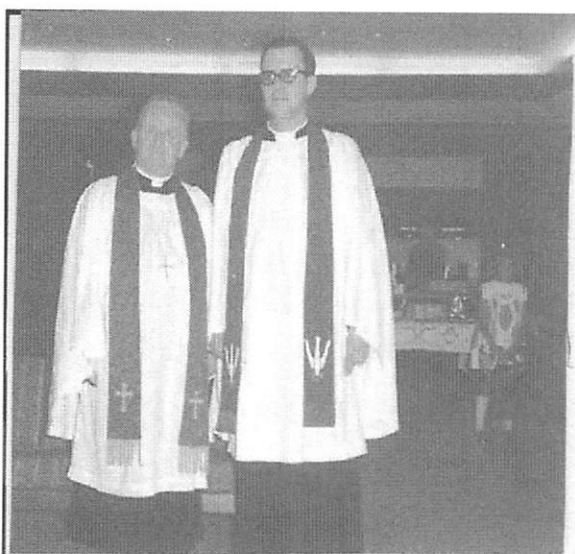
Living in Japan for over thirteen years,  
 being part of the Parliament of World Religions,  
 my practice of Zen Buddhism  
 Now, five adult children, twelve grandkids, eight children  
 of color in that bunch  
 Walking the streets of Milwaukee for Open Housing  
 Sitting in meditation with inmates for over eleven years  
 Standing in Mandala's cell on Robin Island, off Cape Town

I find at the well, a thread that is sewn through all spiritual  
 paths,  
 a Word of Life, a Spirit that emboldens, a peace that passes  
 all understanding  
 I am at that well, a person of dual practice, a revolutionary  
 for justice,  
 sad and angry the mother church never seems to get it, a  
 warrior poet  
 In the tradition of Shambhala...warriors of compassion...  
 No Justice, No Jesus!

But continue the fight. Why? For all peoples, all creatures,  
 the universe...

My vocation, a call to be human, at service of all, be in  
 spiritual practice and live in hope  
 Congratulations Classmates! We are not finished, let's  
 celebrate and continue the work  
 we were sent to do. Whatever form it might be, the Divine  
 blesses us all.

*(In celebration of Fifty Years since my graduation from  
 Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN and on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June my  
 Ordination of Christian Ministry blessed by my father and  
 others)*



Dad and I the day of my ordination, June 19, 1966

## **LISTEN, DO YOU HEAR?**

As I stand in this sacred place,  
I am standing here for the poets who lost their lives because  
they spoke in rhythm, narrative, and free verse to tell the  
truth.

I am speaking here as a warrior poet, of compassion and  
peace, for those poets in Iran, many controlled lands, North  
Korea, Russia, and China, who are always being silenced or  
looking over their shoulders

I am here to counter the Trumps and Cruzes and one  
governor I know, who speak a language of hate, separation,  
reminding us of Germany of the 20's and 30's, and those  
who carry concealed weapons out of fear, and a false sense  
of power over others.

Winter wonderland

Blood changes the color of the snow

## **LISTEN DO YOU HEAR?**

No food, no pencil at school, few text books, state leaders who care nothing for poverty, native people's rights, health care for all, schools, it goes on and on...interested only in money, power...themselves

I stand here, my five minutes, just to say, poets, speak out

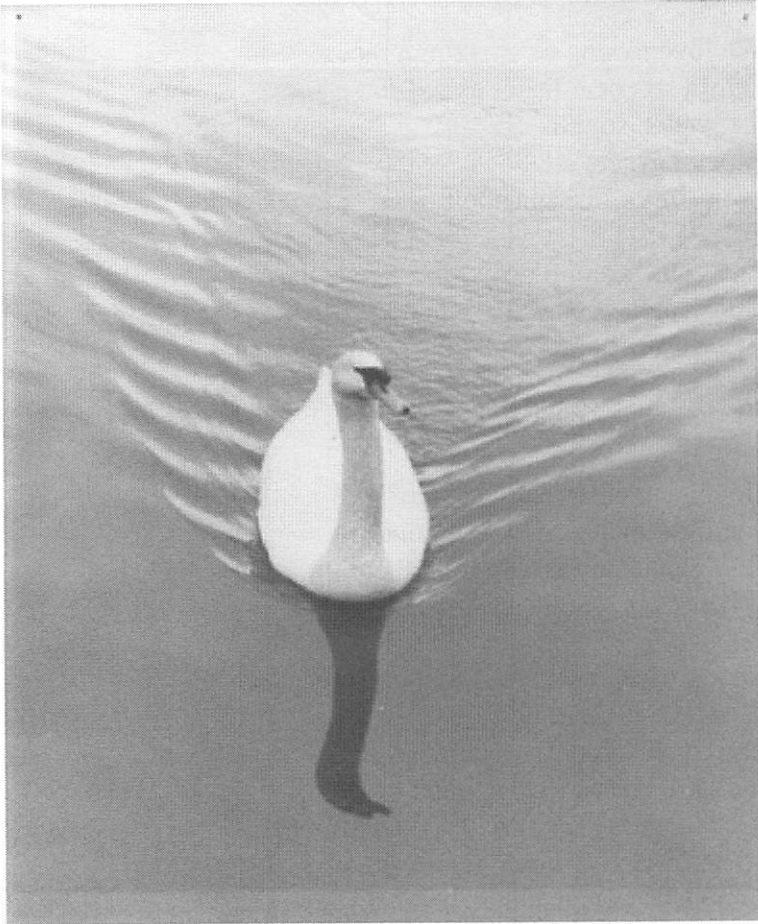
Black Lives Matter, listen to that...

"I can't breathe" is not about asthma, but about police out of control and no justice...

Native lands on which we stand this day are to be honored, not taken, destroyed...burial grounds are our graves...

Winter wonderland...

Blood never goes back where it came from once it has spilled on the land...on our hands



Silence, Peace, a pond in Japan

## **Amazing Grace from the Kitchen Table!**

We love to sing of amazing grace  
Our hearts beat faster as we do  
Yet walls, so tall  
Block farmers all  
From figs and crops their own

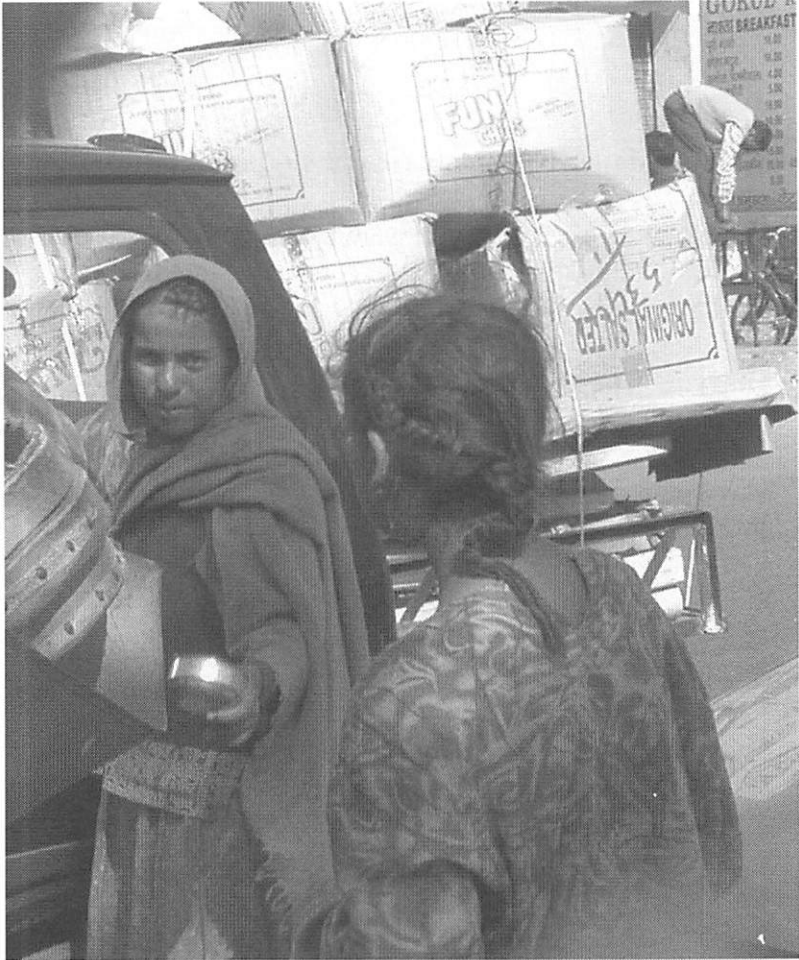
The guns seem to grow like weeds they say  
And violence plays its tune  
We love our grace but  
Live in fear  
Of those we're called to love

Hold hands they say is love for all  
Yet if two women or two gents  
Hold hands or kiss we hold them out  
Where is that amazing grace?

Now where or where is that grace we seek  
Or where is the love for all  
The church you say, is that really so  
If all are not welcome here?

So tell me now where is that grace,  
compassion, love, and peace?  
Wake up my friends, it's very nearby  
Just look in the mirror now





The eyes of need, interrupting the traffic, India

**May you dance when you are not supposed to!**

May you sing off key if you want to!  
May you touch the untouchable  
and have a good hug!

May you get up, and get on the streets  
for all beings!

May you remember, you and I are  
not running with Jesus?

But Jesus is chasing us down...calling us out  
And watch out, there are others coming with Him  
Buddha, Mohammad, the power of the four directions

And many more are not looking for the qualified,  
Just those who are awake, willing, and ready...

What's up baby? Stumblers and broken ones...its time!



The Fire Circle, burning throughout the 1999 Parliament of  
World Religions,  
Cape Town, South Africa

### **Circles of the Fire**

The ninth district,  
Destroyed by hate and apartheid  
Only the holy places were left

Then in '99  
The world came there  
No judgement, just hope

First peoples built a fire  
Where people of many cultures had lived  
Barren now, out of the fear of others

A fire for peace  
A fire for forgiveness

A fire for compassion  
 A fire that speaks:  
 Never again

The Parliament of World Religions  
 came and blessed this bloody land  
 for all, for now and the future.

Circles of fire  
 Tell us of peace...

**Leaves rest**  
 Still falling  
 On a sandy earth  
 Overcast yet, so beautiful  
 As the universe begins a rest  
 And continues the dance...

**What a perfume,**  
 The oak Rick and I just cut  
 Little did we know  
 His last visit to these woods  
 Yet, the spirit of the forest  
 Continues its guard...rest dear brother  
 In peace

**White earth**  
 Covered like a blanket  
 The crunching sound as one walks  
 The path is always there

**Words**

They speak for themselves,  
 Yet, we seem to garner control  
 And it does not work  
 Let them be...just listen...

**Brokenness**

A wild one drops in and takes  
 The precious cup  
 The cup breaks, shattered,  
 How does one drink from brokenness?

**Deep sleep envelops**

One seems to dream throughout  
 Will a new day ever come?  
 Grace for all beings...

**The trees bend a bit this morn**

Not in prayer  
 But the weight of new snow  
 Welcome winter!  
 A new season, a new way...

**A chapel**

Not on a hill  
 Where horses roam  
 But fenced in  
 Prison fences  
 Oh Freedom!

**Today is a new day**

A new month, summer is almost over  
 Fences are fine, you can jump them even go through them  
 or climb them  
 Walls separate, block, discriminate  
 Bring fear, even hatred, even violence  
 Let's build bridges, they bring Unity

**Looking through the woods**

As I cycle by  
 Many fallen trees  
 Deadwood  
 But the forest is alive

**What is a poet anyways?**

I often call myself a warrior poet,  
 in the Shambhala tradition  
 But when I hear my colleagues read their very clever,  
 beautifully worded, simply crafted poetry  
 I wonder why my poetry sounds different

**Speaking to the powers**

The state leads to violence against young black men  
 Continually trying to pull us back into earlier centuries

**Oh, I forgot to say anything**

about the beautiful cup  
 from which I drink my coffee this morning  
 Just riding along writing a poem, hope you enjoy,  
 Black Lives Matter, peace

**New week, a new day**  
 Many new possibilities...  
 A beautiful cool ride  
 Hot and muggy later  
 Reality sets in, where is the justice?  
 Where is the peace?

**Just sitting**  
 Listening  
 Hearing  
 Freedom  
 Happy time  
 Beautiful morning

**Chaos lives, hatred and violence are encouraged**  
 Time to hit the streets for justice  
 Time for justice for compassion for peace me for listening  
 or hearing for praying for peace

**Early-morning in line**  
 Cool so far, the heat is coming  
 Thank God for the beauty of the earth, a gift  
 Begin organizing, educating, voting  
 Peace

**The uneasiness of my heart**  
 and the beauty of this ride  
 in the early cool morning  
 with the Sandhill Cranes talking all around me  
 I am sick, I am sad, I am angry, peace!

**Circus begins on line**

Cleveland beware  
 Chaos is trouble in the name of Democracy  
 Oh, my God, what should we do?  
 Revolution!

**Good morning**

How does one respond to a terrorist attack?  
 Murdering police officers?  
 When the police continue to murder young black men  
 When nothing is wrong or the situation can be handled

**Compassion you say**

Forgiveness you say  
 Love you say  
 Really?  
 Stop all violence and killing then

**Quiet country roads, beautiful green forest**

Many wonderful animals who fly so peacefully  
 I heard the news of Nice this morning  
 So sad  
 So angry

**When I heard the news, I cried**

I am crying a lot these days for the human race,  
 for all beings, for all spiritual paths,  
 for all cultures, for all languages  
 Let there be peace!

**I wonder how we will find peace**

We will create justice  
 so we can always act out of compassion.



**Mild winter night**

Snow melts  
 More will come  
 Don't worry  
 Wake up in the moment!

The koans of revolution  
 Not a riddle  
 Amos a prophet directly spoke  
 He asks,  
 Does the trap spring shut?  
 Unless something is caught?

Can people walk together?  
 Without agreeing to meet?

**The old Zen adage**

Does a dog have a Buddha nature?

Who hears a tree fall in the forest?

Questions  
 No answers  
 Just wonder  
 Just sit...

**Early morning**

New day  
 Yet, an uncertainty  
 We make the day  
 What it is to be

**The leaves have fallen**

Started to melt into the earth  
 A new season  
 One of brown, red and orange  
 Yet with rain  
 It seems all the same

Is that the human journey too?  
 Many colors of humanity, history  
 Finally  
 Ashes, a grayish hue

The moment  
 The wonderful moment  
 The damn moment  
 It is all we have  
 Live it

**OMG**

Is this happening, really happening?  
 A dictator running for President?  
 A hateful, disrespectful person?  
 We bring this on ourselves  
 The question being,  
 How do we now proceed in this reality?  
 Denial will be easy  
 Moving against it will be dangerous  
 Remember the SS...

**This is who I am...**

A P.K.

A little wild

Never liking authority

Didn't get caught I guess...

This is who I am...

Simple but deep upbringing

Traditional path

College, seminary, parish

And then...

This is who I am...

Joining CORE, marching for Open Housing

Father Jim, Kathy Brewster, Clifford Brown,

State Representative Cecil Brown...

18<sup>th</sup> and Locust, Hephatha

This is who I am...

The Spirit Movement

The Order Ecumenical

Hartford, Oubari, Japan, Fukuoka, Japan

Working in Japan, Korea, Philippians,

Malaysia, Zambia,

This is who I am...

Shiro San and the company, NKH

Japan is home for thirteen and a half years

Traveling the world

And then back home again...

This is who I have become...

A carrier of the Spirit of Human Kind

A dual practitioner of teachings and life

Of the Buddha and Jesus

This is who I have become...  
Karen, and all the family...  
Discovering through all this,  
The moment  
And whatever is to happen  
We are ONE  
My journey is yours  
And yours mine  
Peace...

“I made an unbreakable  
pledge to myself that people  
would find their voices in my  
song”

Pablo Neruda Fully  
Empowered  
pages 86-87, 1962

**Did I work all night?**

Or was it a dream?

Tired, yet the sun shines behind the dark clouds

You wonder,  
Did it happen?  
It already did!

Always reforming you say  
But never changing  
In the moment  
A breath in  
A breath out  
That's transformation  
New moments  
Seems nothing happens  
All changes  
The breath  
No beginning  
No end  
Just now...

Falling  
Slowly it seems  
Breaking the fall  
Yet, wondering  
What is happening?  
Losing control?  
Feeling light, dizzy, and unsure  
Now what?  
You might not need to know...

I keep trying the same damn password...  
Come on man!

Oops, the caps are on stupid...  
It works!  
Enlightenment?  
No, wake up...

### **August, 1968 was a messy time**

The Soviets invaded the Czechoslovaks...violence,  
disruption  
Grasping for territory and power  
It was the TIME cover on August 30<sup>th</sup>, 1968

I was moving to a new place, 29<sup>th</sup> and Locust to serve

Hephatha Lutheran, on 18<sup>th</sup> and Locust, Milwaukee  
A community of people who did not run from the City as  
many so-called Christians did...

First day, John, a former community staff member, came in  
to see me  
He checked the building and found the janitor  
Dead in the boiler room of a heart attack...what a away to  
begin this one...

Yes, everything is messy...or is that the way it is...or is it  
real?

### **A Vet's Lament and Hope...**

August 26<sup>th</sup>, 1968, GI's gun down fleeing NVA  
 Near Tam Ki, Red Toll 300  
 Always red toll, not ours or civilians  
 Dehumanizing war  
 Where is the peace?

How do we refer to our neighbor, the stranger?  
 It was a terrible war  
 I was a reserve Chaplain in the Navy  
 Serving a billet at the Navy Coast Guard Center  
 Down by the lake  
 Monday nights  
 Nam funerals

### **A death-call early one cold January morning**

Yes, it was about nine in the morning  
 I met the Major at the Center  
 We drove in his VW Bug out to the suburbs

The ride was filled with stories of the perfect battles  
 He had been part of in Nam  
 I wondered, what will this death call be like?

Then we drove up to the small home  
 It was a cold and sunny morning  
 The father was standing at the sink  
 We could see him at the window

He saw two uniformed men get out of the car  
 A Marine and a Chaplain  
 He began to scream

Even with the windows closed  
We could hear the pain  
By the time we came to the door  
The mother was also distraught

Major handled it well, in fact very well  
With compassion and love  
An eighteen-year-old, killed on his birthday  
In a rice paddy, far, far away

The tears were flowing  
The Dad had kicked his son out a year earlier  
Could not control the situation

Trouble with the law  
The judge gave a choice  
Jail or the Marines  
Now this, the pain, the guilt  
Why? It's my fault he kept crying  
Yet, somehow, we brought some calm, a little comfort  
The sadness was deep as we left

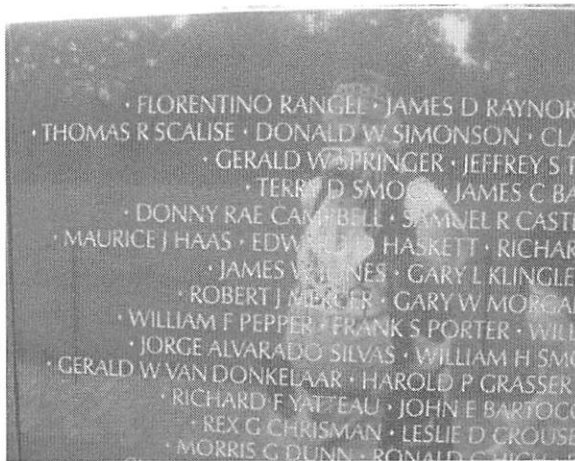
The ride back  
Was very quiet  
A few months later my Major resigned from the Marines

He had lost all to fight an unwanted war  
Too many death calls  
For me too many Nam funerals  
I wrote my letter to Washington  
Never heard from them

I was released some years later  
Inactive reserve...  
But then years later I visited the wall...  
I am now revisiting it all



Decades later, a Monday morning  
 A request from the local Sheriff  
 A vet had stood at attention for the last time  
 A drive to the office  
 To tell his loved one  
 His name will be on the wall  
 Surprising God,  
 Knowing the gate is never closed



A Warrior Poet, at the Wall in Washington DC, Sept. 2009

## **A reflection in the black stone, just a picture you say**

No, I was not in Nam, but I served those who came back in bags and their loved ones  
Yes, my name is not here, but all our names are...

Our names will be on the stone somewhere  
It will be a stone for those who allowed these wars to happen in our name,  
for Iraq, Afghanistan, Congo, Sudan, Palestine, slavery, Native people, Japanese internment, and on and on...

What does it mean to build peace for all people? Think about it, chant for it, pray to whomever you pray

I remember a "Nam" funeral, the man who came back, was one of ten siblings. His sisters and brothers sat by ages with the sad parents at each end, the bookcases of time and love

The Marines came up so slowly, stood at attention and saluted their comrade, so slowly and then returned to their seats...

I thought this would never end, then the taps at the grave, it stays with you for hours and days, no recording then, the real thing...

The question is always, it seems, did he die in vain, what bull shit, the issue is he died, he is not here to care for and play with his nine siblings  
For another war that should not have been fought, when will we learn? When will we learn?

**When the King hires a poet  
He cuts out the poet's tongue... *Old Arab Saying***

**With Palestinian Writers, Poets behind bars**

In Israel, Palestine, Iran and else where

Talk of something worse than water boarding  
And the murdering of the people

With a twitter, rather than a voice for all  
Taking power as a dictator

Poets, speak as the warrior poets we are!  
Speaking to the Truth, in the face of a sick power

A knock on the door could come  
If one takes the present power group to the end

Resist! Resist! Resist!  
Stop! Stop! Stop!

Organize, Listen, Plan, Act!  
All people have the power!!

**Dreams**

When in the midst of a dream  
You feel like it lasts forever

Maybe even all night long  
Yet, one never misses the sunrise...

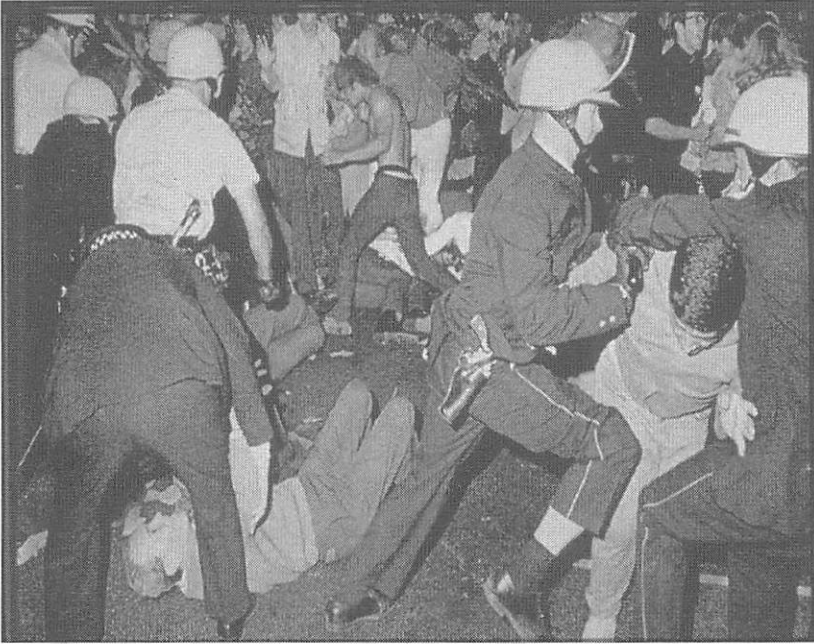
**Stand by me**

Not over there  
Need not fear  
We are the same...

Oh yes,  
We think differently  
But so do others  
We are one...  
Stand with me  
Let's stand together  
We are ONE!

**Talk the Talk**

Walk and walk  
Think it  
Do it  
Dream it  
Be it  
Your choice baby...



Picking a President 1968

### Resisting in 2017

I can hear Allen Ginsberg and his friends during the acts of  
State Violence  
against the people

Sitting, reciting, OOOMMMMMMMM  
amid State Violence

Resisting as the batons crash the heads of the people  
Some things never change, Ferguson, Baltimore, New York  
City, Milwaukee

On and on, State Violence murdering our Black Men

Hit the streets  
Organize  
Young and Old, Everyone

*A lamp for those desiring one (Prayer of the Bodhisattva)*

**Light? Where is the light?**

Who wants light?  
Do I have to help someone?

Too many questions, I think  
Let's just walk together  
Light or no light  
Clear path or no path...  
It's all about moving towards  
Moving together  
Trusting the path, those with us  
It's about moving ahead

**The small deer standing in the car lights**

Does it wonder what those lights are?  
Running from one side of the road to another  
Finally, into the ditch and off in the bush  
Is that freedom? Or fear?  
Think about it!

Early morning  
New day  
Yet, an uncertainty  
We make the day  
What it is to be  
The leaves have fallen  
Started to melt into the earth  
A new season  
One of brown, red, and orange  
Yet with rain  
It seems all the same  
Is that the human journey too?

Many colors of humanity, history  
 Finally, ashes, a grayish hue  
 E-mails  
 Q-mails  
 What mails  
 Who cares  
 Honesty is a foundational need  
 Clarity of purpose necessary  
 We have screwed this shit up  
 Haven't we?

### **Deep sadness**

Comes when one has lost  
 Someone dear  
 Yet in this pain  
 One finds truth

### **On the march...**

Swollen feet, sore back  
 A bit cold  
 But satisfied  
 For the moment

Millions march  
 For all humankind  
 For justice, freedom  
 Peace, love,  
 And all...

Ignored by the powerful  
 Alternative facts tell them  
 A different story

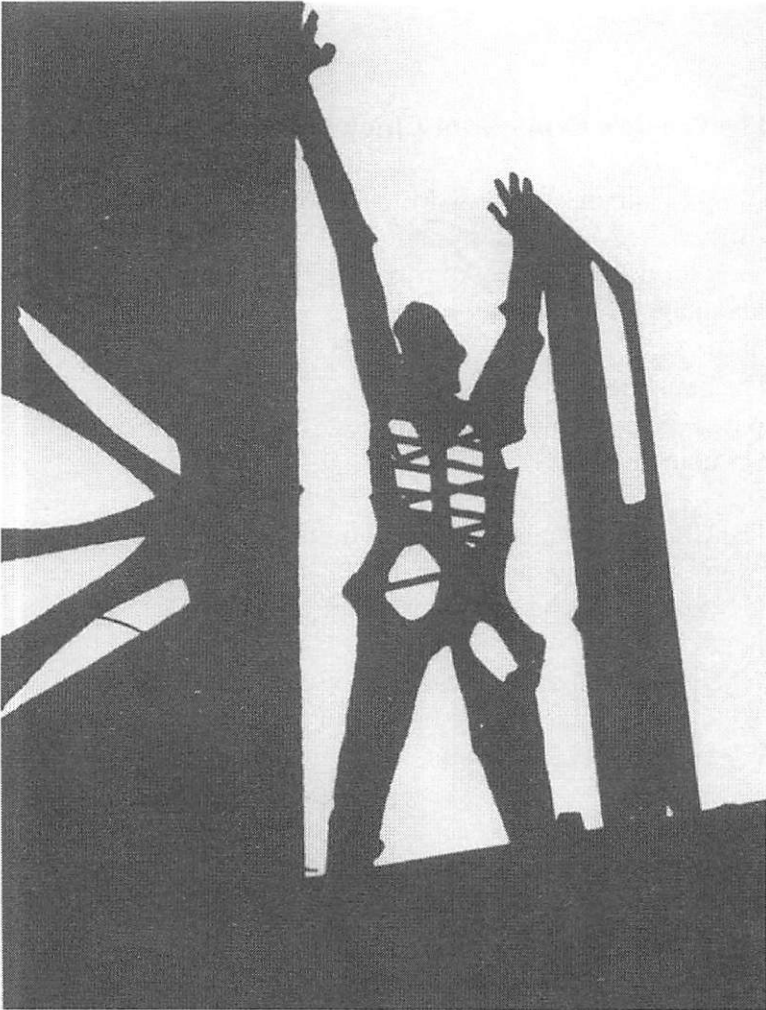
The truth is  
We are angry  
Mad  
Pissed off  
We are not going away baby...

Organize  
Speak out  
Community conversations  
Run for office

Know your neighbor  
Did not mean change your neighbor  
Know them  
So that differences become  
Tools for change...

Feet still swollen  
Still cold  
Angry as hell  
Not for the moment  
But for change...





### The Iron Man

A symbol of all beings from the sixties on the West Side of Chicago in Fifth City, a model community project for the world!

## **The People's Republic of China began a campaign**

Urging Chinese people worldwide to "come back to the arms of the Motherland," and sent four ships to foreign ports for that purpose. Approximately 100,000 people took advantage of the offer.

The question is  
Where is my home?  
My homelands?

The Chinese went home to a revolution that killed millions  
I don't want to go home for that  
This has always been a struggle for humankind

Where we come from creates who we are in many ways  
And now I wonder, more lately as I grow older,  
Where the hell am I headed?

It's not a map question  
It comes to me as a spiritual one  
Sorry I won't get on the ship  
It's strange to go backwards  
The path we are all on never ends  
Never goes home  
But home feeds us as we walk

One is free from going back home  
But never free from home...

## **Bull's and Cushions in Mexico City**

Mexico City, millions, life everywhere  
Ever rode a cab in Mexico City?  
Dangerous but fun, up on the curb and all  
Music playing, but you get there...most of the time

Bullfight Sunday afternoons  
With friends of the family  
I remember a beautiful Swedish lady  
We sat high in the circular stadium  
The bulls came out,  
the troubadour ready, with red cape and sword,  
the bulls refused to fight,  
one after the other...  
Then the cushions began to fly  
Everywhere...

OMG  
I just looked at the news today  
It's still happening  
Throw a cushion for me...



**Ground Zero, New York City  
January 12, 2002**

### Only four months

One day  
 Since 9/11  
 The scars, the dust, the tragedy is still there  
 A bell rings  
 Everything is silent  
 They have come upon remains  
 A flag is given  
 Remains covered, the bells chime  
 Salutes given and work continues...

This is not a tourist place yet  
 It is a burial place  
 In the hole

In the air, the fine grains of dust  
 Remains, memories, loss

Now a fine museum with reflecting pools  
 Where the towers stood,  
 Remembering all who perished...

For me, what you see in the photo  
 Does what I need to see  
 To remember

To learn  
 To know  
 Non-violence  
 Is needed  
 Not war and  
 Anger...



### **Buddha's of the Old City, Chiang Mai, Thailand**

A mile or so square  
 Ancient walls, streets  
 Many old, old temples  
 The faces of the Buddha  
 Smiling on all beings

Heart Sutra  
 Chanted in the early morning  
 After the monks carry their bowls  
 Through the ancient city  
 Begging for food  
 Without saying a word  
 Presence  
 Giving opportunity for compassion...

Wonderful walk  
 Peace, yes peace

**Rough but soft hands**

A big heart  
A wonderful smile  
That was grandpa Gus

A stone mason from Sweden  
A quiet man  
When I knew him best a confused man

Often the folks would be out  
He thought he was caring for me  
And I was caring for him

He missed grandma  
She had died a few years earlier when  
He left the city to live with us

One morning the sheriff called  
He had just picked Gus up walking a mile a minute  
Miles from town  
Going to get his wife...

The manager of the construction crew  
At the beautiful Gothic church  
Dad's congregation was building called

Gus was up on the scaffolds  
Giving the stone masons some advice  
He said they had brought him carefully down

Hands of a builder,  
Hands of a mason,  
Heart of a Buddha,  
Spirit of a loving and loved human being,  
My Grandpa Gus....

## **Caroline Olson was my Grandma**

She was a loving soul  
Mother, wife, church woman  
A strong and compassionate heart

When mom took her to see their  
plots at the cemetery in Minneapolis  
She commented to my mom,  
“For goodness sake! I don’t know anybody here”

Mom assured her  
There would not be a coffee and cookie gathering  
Each morning at ten  
She smiled

I knew Caroline through the spirit and compassion  
Of my mother  
When they called  
and said Caroline had passed away,  
I saw my mom cry, maybe for the first time...  
It was troubling for me

Then Grandpas Gus, the stone mason came to live with us  
And many things changed, as they often do...



**Dad, left at midnight for the seminary, September 13,  
1924**

He registered and entered Luther Seminary on the 15<sup>th</sup>

That was my dad  
Never tarried too long on anything  
His life, his ministry, were filled with urgency and  
compassion

When the Mission Department of the ELC called,  
They had a ministry in Mexico City for English Speaking  
folks to start  
“Spike, are you interested?”  
Dad responded, “If I had a bike I would start right now”  
We moved to Mexico City

Thanks Dad  
Two things you said to me are with me daily,  
“I do not worry about you Robert, but I do worry about the  
part of me in you...”  
And after being in Hephatha Parish a few times he said,  
“I don’t always understand what you are doing Robert, but  
I love you”

Now, one statement keeps me on my toes  
The other keeps me going  
What else do I need?  
Thanks Dad!

## **The winds are strong**

And seem to cut right through you  
on the plains of North Dakota.

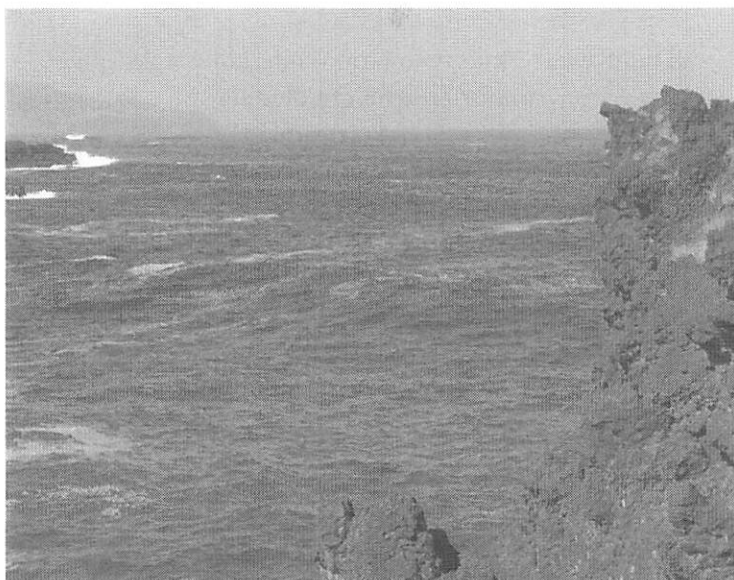
Dad and Mom's first call to four small country churches  
around Drake, ND. Forty-Five dollars a month,  
just before the depression, driving those  
country roads sometimes 100 miles a Sunday.  
Soon all there was, was beef three times a day.  
Dad never wanted beef stew again after those years.

My big brother joins the family in 1929  
a few years later off to the CCC camps  
on the East Coast, sometime in the 1000 Islands  
and a call to Green Valley  
near Oconto Falls, Wisconsin.

In 1940, the war, and Dad is off to the Navy  
not until a very small package arrived,  
Bob...

We forget  
It is the cutting winds and the snow,  
the sunsets and the waters,  
even a limited diet by the depression  
that shape who we are.

Certainly, true of Helen and Spike...  
Filled with the Scandinavian spirit and heart  
the warriors of this earth  
caring  
compassionate  
loving  
my blood... gratefulness!



The blue waters of the Azores, February 2017

**“Times, they are a changing,” as the folk song goes**

There was a time when the white congregations  
in our cities were closing  
instead of changing,  
facing reality of their racism,  
and the transformation of the hood.

During those explosive days, I found myself  
and family serving a community on 18<sup>th</sup> and Locust.  
They voted to stay, 80 to 20 before my call.

The old and middle-aged folks,  
white and German in culture, and a few African Americans  
were not to be moved by fear and misinformation.

It was not an easy journey,  
but a real dance, once we heard the music...

The verses that follow are a narrative  
of compassion and justice, even as the mother church never  
quite got the message or the reality.

In the poetry of the spiritual practice called Christian,  
Lutheran, we were the People of God in this place!  
All are welcome in this place...



### **The hood, the streets where people find their home**

18<sup>th</sup> and Locust was a typical place.  
 They used the poetry “inner city” back then.  
 Most the houses were old Milwaukee types.

The floor plans that were busy  
 but home to many!

That old stone German Lutheran Church on the corner  
 had not always been welcoming,  
 but change was happening.

Something happened, reality called,  
 now it was the center of things.

The gym, street jazz event, community renewal,  
 a real revelation in the midst of fear, racism, and hate.

I wonder why the “mother church” was  
 so damn slow and unwilling to serve, and not face these ills  
 with

the strong message of the Gospel they claimed to be.

My mentor, Cecil Brown,  
 only representative from the Black communities in  
 the Legislature of Wisconsin in Madison with an  
 afro, dashiki, a strong voice, and a compassionate heart.  
 We spent hours planning change, a revolution.  
 He introduced us to CORE, the Milwaukee Chapter,  
 reminded me my first day as pastor on 18<sup>th</sup> and Locust,  
 “No more plans now Bob, it's reality we serve,”  
 How true it was  
 How true it is!

### **Lavender, recovered, rebuilt,**

Serving others or yourself, it is a choice  
 The pain of recovery, being cut from an addiction, a  
 healing  
 Breaking away from what others said you were and what  
 you look like to them,  
 and what you discover is who you are

First for many, came addiction, fear, hating yourself, and  
 separation from all  
 There was a moment, as a man,  
 A moment when you say, your soul says, I am a woman  
 Then began the journey, a journey of liberation...

Then there is the psychologist, long hours on the phone  
 The medical things, even some pills  
 The mind games that play with you  
 The others just don't get it

It's coming soon now  
 What is that? Being public, this is not cross-dressing  
 It's being you

Today I will dress as me, for me, for my inner world  
 There will be a silence in others and then you hear,  
 from somewhere,  
 you are beautiful lady, yes you are

Two words keep sounding in the head  
 Recovery/lavender/service

Recovery, rebirth, rejection, separation, recover, uncover  
 the truth, rejection again, re-birth,  
 renew, but how does one stay on the recovery-wagon

A yellow bus, seats removed, rebuilt, restarted, repainted  
 lavender  
 Lavender bimbo, you say, royal color, beautiful hue for a  
 beautiful lady  
 Lavish, a leveling of all pain, recovery, not the end but the  
 beginning anew, renew...  
 Rebuilding the old bus, a workshop and tools in back half,  
 your new condo in the front...  
 So clever, so lavender, so wonderful, the duende fills your  
 life

*“The duende, then, is a power, not a work; it is a struggle,  
 not a thought.” “I have heard an old maestro of the guitar  
 say, ‘the duende is not in the throat; the duende climbs up  
 inside you, from the soles of your feet.’”*

*Play and Theory of the Duende by Federico Garcia Lorca  
 in Deep Song and other Prose edited and translated by  
 Christopher Mauer, New Directions books page 43*

**Beginnings come with a slight wind**

Often with a splash  
Sometimes with an explosive sense

Yet we all begin  
The first step  
The first swim  
Our first trail or mountain

Yet, we are conscious again  
When we begin to speak of the end  
Or the passing over

The real value is in the path  
The journey  
The way

Always called to a way  
From some ancient or modern word  
Called to sense of justice, peace, freedom

Yet the end is coming  
Is it near?  
Who knows

Oh, one thing more  
There is no end!  
Just a boring evening on a raft  
to take us to the other side  
The path is there

To be continued...



## **On the steps of the Temple**

It is getting harder to reach down and slip on these sandals...

Temple after Temple, the sandals come off and on again...  
Sacred space everywhere, humility in one's actions not just thought...

As I leaned over and put my sandals on,  
A monk watching the temple that morning had come out  
and watched me carefully  
When I stood up, he offered me his arm to walk down the  
many steps

I was surprised at this act of kindness  
I kindly said, "It's ok, I can make it," and he smiled...

What struck me for the rest of my Temple walk through the  
old city of Chiang Mae  
Was the natural way this happened  
Not a commandment,  
Not a rule,  
Not for merit,  
Or the promise of a star in his crown

But out of compassion, a deep comprehensive kind of love  
Unconditional, unmerited, unmeasured love for all beings

Thanks, my friend  
Your care and this lesson that will not leave my heart or  
mind  
No merit or reward, but a human act, a practice, oh that it  
can be ours

## **Dodge Poetry Festival, Friday**

The sounds of jazz  
 Runs through the voices of many  
 Some where the words will sound  
 Muses from the soul  
 Speaking all tongues  
 Speaking to all

All life is suffering, the Buddha taught  
 Caused by hanging onto, attachment,  
 Refusal to let go...  
 Maybe another word he would add  
 Would be GRAB

Disrespect, abuse, overpower  
 We certainly feel the pain  
 Watching a dictator win  
 An asshole of the lowest degree  
 Or highest in Trump's world

How does the dog with a Buddha mind,  
 let this BS go?

RESIST!

LET GO

RESIST

FIGHT

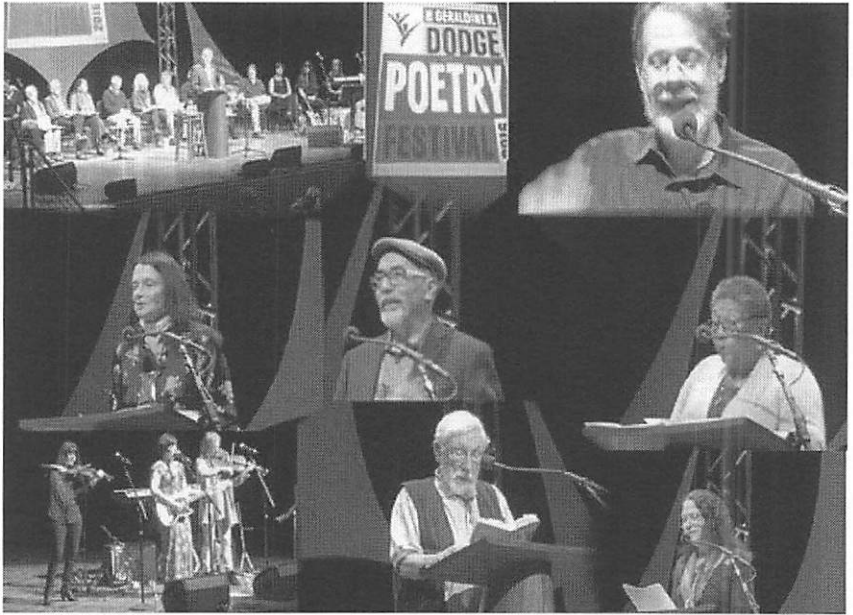
CHANGE

Watch out  
Things will change  
Or maybe, be destroyed  
And people will suffer  
Justice suffering  
Non-violence suffering  
Again, let go!  
RESIST!!

Civics lesson destroyed  
The tree fell and no one heard it  
Sadness  
The geese gather  
Shit everywhere

Were you talking about the election?  
Ancient ships found  
Miles below Dead Sea  
Some day they will find Trump  
They will wonder

Did the BS survive?



The Dodge Poetry Festival, October 2016, Newark, NJ  
Many of my heros's doing their thing!

## **There will be a day...**

What happens when the world falls apart?  
A bomb goes off you lose a leg, an arm, a hand?

What happens when a well-planned time  
crashes to the earth?

What happens when a dream is destroyed?  
By violence, hate, fear

The Buddha lived in the moment  
And invites all beings to do the same  
How does one empty one's self when there seems to  
be a flood of pain?

The Buddha said, embrace the moment, the pain, and  
let it go  
It is easy to say, difficult to pull off...

Once a preacher said:  
Every moment is a moment of grace  
And asked how many of these moments have you  
wasted, let go of, ignored?  
How can these events, the sadness, the pain, the  
anger,  
be "moments of grace"? In the darkness of the night,  
you see the stars, hope

Old Joe Biden spoke a phrase that spoke to me  
as he was comforting the family of a slain officer  
"There will come a day, sometime in the future,

when you will smile first and then the tears will  
come”

Yes, there will be a moment

A smile

A tear

A moment of grace

A moment embraced and freed

A moment when, now, just a moment, all is accepted

### **The poetry teacher gave us an assignment**

Write about a time when someone told you something that  
was the truth  
and later found out was not the truth  
They told me  
pray and you will get that bike  
They told me  
act right and there'll be no trouble  
They told me  
don't hit back and I got beat up  
They told me  
they'll be no problem and the cops showed up  
They told me  
just try one, and I was hooked  
They told me  
they told me, but it was, BS

**Why not be one...**

*(a reflection, gratefulness for the cruise....)*

The room is elegant, the table set so beautifully  
 I am not accustomed to so many glasses or silverware  
 Yes, we were assigned, by numbers  
 But isn't it a miracle what a family has been created, by  
 chance?

The servers, showing us what service means  
 The chefs and all the staff sharing their gifts with us  
 We gather that first night, strangers and leave, family  
 Maybe never to see each other again

But for a week  
 Just a few days  
 We experience, with different languages,  
 cultures, different ideas  
 What a oneness, interconnectedness,  
 a friendship this world gives us...  
 Or maybe, with family and old friends  
 a new experience of what it means  
 To be connected, by love, memories,  
 or a new relationship being celebrated  
 Thank You!  
 Yet, lest we forget,  
 The people of this world right now  
 who have no table, or glasses or food  
 Might we gaze on this wonderful experience of the meal, a  
 eucharist of humanity  
 The cruise, to prepare us to serve those in need,  
 with more compassion...  
 All of you, the stranger, now community,  
 the server, the chef, and staff remind me of something...

The ancient chat of the Bodhisattva, in the Buddhist path puts it this way,  
 “May a rain of food and drink descend to clear away the pain of thirst and hunger, And during the eon of famine may I myself change into food and drink  
 May I become an inexhaustible treasure for those who are poor and destitute, may I turn into all things they need, and may these be placed close beside them”

Yes, I ate, I celebrated, I got to know again,  
 or for the first time  
 The Bodhisattva in you,  
 in all beings, the one, like you and me  
 Who can move on, but stays back  
 to make sure all beings are blessed  
 The guest, the server, the chef, the staff...  
 Is it possible this could happen at home and everywhere?  
 Let us see...let us try...why not? Peace!

**Next life, already...never prepared, but we are...**

It was one of those warm, early summer days...  
 Thank God for the fans in the chapel where the Dharma Brothers meet  
 and sit, and chant, and walk meditatively and talk...  
 But this was not a "normal" one

One brother sat with the Chaplain, sad looking, almost in tears  
 Just heard the night before, "Mom is gone" only 52 years  
 "I knew she was sick, but I figured (and wouldn't we all)  
 She would be ok, I can't be there, hold my sisters hand, my other siblings don't seem to care or know what to do"

The Sangha arrives, the men are always happy to be together, to sit...



But then I mention our brother's sadness and loss, and another speaks up, "My mom had a serious stroke two days ago, she's in Mississippi, it is harder not knowing than accepting her death..." tears, some anger, "I want to hold her hand, do something, I can't"

We had a healing sit that afternoon...

What's going on here?

But how does one handle death?

Have you thought of yours?

I sure have, at least after this afternoon with my Dharma Brothers...

We are reminded at times like these, "Death is not the end," "Prison is not the end," "Unskillful acts that hurt others are not the end!"

We are reminded, it's the path stupid!

It's the way, sister, brother, whoever...

These confluence of events, mom dying and mom near death

That woke us all up, we are all Buddha's, awakened ones

Not with answers or words that take away the pain, the anger, the loss,

or fill the void...but a reminder, this is real, this happens to all of us,

to all creatures, can we avoid it, no, but we can journey through these dead filled moments, as life...

**Matt 5:13 Yes you are the salt of the earth,**  
 but if the salt has lost its taste,  
 how can its saltiness be restored?

I am sure there are some, many who will say as a country,  
 as a people, we have lost our taste, our saltiness.  
 The sense of justice  
 The feeling of fairness  
 The search for understating the peace

How does one restore civility?  
 When there is a clown in the *White* House  
 Oh my, yes White House.  
 The spurge of hatred and racism is reborn in Trump  
 The taste of justice could be lost

**Early-morning  
 Silence and the sound of nature**

What a gift, what a responsibility  
 Fields of wheat, alfalfa in line  
 Moving slightly by the wind

A gift one never forgets

Biking the challenge, meeting a friend along the road  
 He's hiding his face from me  
 "Good morning, turtle"

Enlightenment  
 What does that mean?

Light breeze in the morning  
 Riding through the forest  
 Standing present to the trees that live there

Listening to their voices through you, here  
 Strange sign  
 Telling me to go right  
 OK  
 A new morning  
 Gray yet  
 Somehow the sun still shines

**I didn't want to pray.**

The Chamber guy called  
 Inviting me to bring a prayer  
 for their Annual Leadership Dinner

Of course, why not  
 I was a community leader, I guess

One morning later, I read in the local rag  
 Mayor Giuliani was the speaker  
 Wait, I do not want to be in the same room with him

I didn't want to pray

All my colleagues,  
 From the unions, community groups  
 Would be demonstrating outside

I wanted to be there with them, I didn't want to pray

The Mayor and his police were making a sport  
 out of stopping and often killing people of color in the Big  
 Apple  
 A large report had just come out, condemning their state  
 sanctioned violence  
 I had been to a conference in the City, about this issue

lead by Al Sharpton and others a few weeks before

I didn't want to pray  
 So now what?  
 I called one of my board members,  
 An African American woman,  
 She said something I have never forgotten,  
 "Bob, you go pray  
 Your job is to help all people understand  
 interfaith, community justice for all, not just the folks who  
 agree with you"

I didn't want to pray, but I prayed  
 I prayed, a carefully thought out one  
 While my buddies were outside  
 Speaking truth to power in their presence, signs and voices!  
 The Mayor spoke, he was running for president soon  
 But then, to make things more difficult, he used a story at  
 the end of his speech  
 about an immigrant family settled by my organization  
 in the local paper that morning  
 And he praised our work. Damn

I think Karen and I were the only ones  
 who stood at the end but did not clap  
 The Mayor came off the stage, directly to our table  
 He took my hand, looked me in the eye and said, "pray for  
 me Father"  
 The next day he announced he had prostate cancer  
 We were survivors, brothers of the big C  
 I sent him a note of encouragement

Watch out who you pray for...  
 Damn, do I have to pray for 45?

I remember the time I didn't want to pray, and I did...



*Soon to be melted if we do not act, Alaskan Cruise, August 2009*

### **It is all about Justice, Freedom, Peace!**

The civil rights movement was an exciting time  
It brought out the best and the worst in everyone  
White privilege, racism, hatred, misinformation  
were everywhere

Congress of Racial Equality, CORE  
Was a group that came out of New York City  
Roy Ennis and others were the leaders

In Milwaukee,  
The local CORE was an active group  
Cecil Brown, state legislature was one of the leaders  
He invited us to come to some meetings

I only remember one  
Hot summer Sunday afternoon  
In a small store front on Third Street

People were angry  
The so-called riots were about to begin  
So called because they were created by the Mayor,  
and the goon squad, Opps, the police force,  
so they could beat some heads

Here we were in this meeting  
When an elderly lady jumped on the table where we were  
sitting  
Yelling something with a knife in her hand  
Then someone pulled a gun  
Cecil grabbed my arm and pulled us out the door  
No one got hurt,  
Just lots of yelling  
That was my last meeting at CORE for awhile

But it was those groups of community folks  
who spoke, walked, and moved for truth to power,  
for justice, freedom, and peace  
Seems we are starting again on that same path  
Get your shoes on...



*My family Mom and Dad, Caroline and Gus, Grandparents*

**sit.....listen....**

justice

silence

just sit

be mindful of your breath

listen

.....

today sitting on behalf of those who died

in Hiroshima

and on the 9th, in Nagasaki

the 100,000 who died as Tokyo was bombed

and 75% of Fukuoka was destroyed

before the "bombs"

.....

just sit

peace

we chant, pray, dance, sing,  
 for peace for all beings....  
 today, shut up  
 just sit.....  
 .....  
 peace  
 love  
 justice  
 sit.....listen....



*The center of the Bombing of Hiroshima, City Government Building*

**Morning always comes, doesn't it? And has for millions of years...**

here in the rocks and desert near the Canyon  
 the flora, the animals, large and small  
 the desert and rocks of millions of years



they tell the story, the sea came and went away and  
 returned, again and again  
 forming a Canyon that can only be called Grand

the creatures of this earth developed in the same way,  
 step by step, millions of years by millions of years  
 first on all fours and then carefully on two feet  
 use of the arms, the fingers,  
 the voice, the sounds,  
 the vowels, the words, language!

tribes, clans, nations,  
 villages, towns, larger towns called cities  
 relationships grew as did all creation  
 era by era, moment by moment  
 who created the past and the future?

each clan, family, tribe had a way to speak to the unknown,  
 ritual, food, rocks, trees, stars, moon, sun all became part of  
 a litany of the spirit, and then religion,  
 spirituality...discovery and wonder...

four directions, four jewels, eight-fold path, precepts,  
 proverbs, commandments, good news,  
 all gave direction, all were grounded in the soul, the heart  
 of humans today having seen the miracle of this earth in  
 the cliffs and formations of the Canyons, deserts, rivers and  
 fields of wheat. The lines, the story of creation in the many  
 diverse rocks and flora of the earth, a bit of disgust with  
 human development everywhere. When will we learn to let  
 the earth be, be itself like we wish to be...forever...

the many levels of animals, growth, rocks, formations, that  
 is a gift from the earth to all beings...to you and me...

then the sun sets on another day

the clouds, the colors no easel can create  
 and then the dark, the time of rest  
 and the moon and stars put on a show of millions of light  
 years, of many minerals, and light...

oh, how unconscious we are about our home, the earth  
 oh, that we may wake up,  
 be aware, be caring for all creation  
 oh, that the millions of years will teach us,  
 the earth will make it  
 it is us, the human clan, that might not!

**So, you came to hear poetry... from an old man?**

I bet not!

So here we are, what shall we do?  
 I want you to know my life,  
 the lines have never ended right  
 They don't with my poetry either

They say, poets touch the soul, speak from the heart  
 Do you mean cover up reality or speak to the truth?  
 I suppose they do all that, I don't know

Oh well, what shall we poet about  
 this evening, this morning, whenever?

The leaves are falling or the trees are  
 budding all overHow was that?

The people are divided, not over issues but unfounded fear  
 and even hatred of race....class  
 Oh, the leaves fall to the ground, and turn into earth, and  
 make forest fires stronger if they are dry

Yes, the poet is the prophet in whatever age or time  
 An alarm clock going off when it is not set to  
 A call to action when we are tired,  
 worn down, and hopeless  
 In these times, what is it we need to be reminded of, these  
 times of fear, violence against  
 each other, nations and faiths...

Like the trees, the leaves, the falling, the dying, the new  
 plants in the spring, even new trees everywhere, we are  
 reminded by the poet prophet,

WE ARE ALL INTERCONNECTED, THAT'S IT,  
 INTERTWINED, CONNECTED WITH ALL PEOPLES,  
 ALL BEINGS, ALL CREATION  
 THE LEAVES, THE FALLING, THE CHANGE OF  
 COLOR, THE SLEPPING EARTH, THE NEW SPRING  
 FLOWERS, THE HOPE THE CYCLE BRINGS

Cycle you say, you mean what comes around goes around,  
 I have heard that bull shit all my life, there must be another  
 path...

I walked through the woods today, can you remember the  
 sound of leaves and needles under your feet, a wonderful  
 sound and the smell, a nature incense, without the smoke,  
 just the air filled with harvest, a strange kind of dying and  
 coming to life again, a cycle we are all a part of...  
 Even though some of those religious nuts want us to  
 believe some have it others don't, we will come by this way  
 again, not the same person or even the same form...  
 Many life times prepare us for this moment, not of wishes  
 or dreams, but the reality of this moment. Well, now you  
 WILL hear the poet in me, hang on.



*Four in One, on the side of our drive way, Neshkoro, WI*

### **Reflections by one spirit on the path**

A more recent story is told of a great Zen teacher that was asked by a student,

“I feel confused, almost a feeling having of many personalities, spiritually. I was born Buddhist in a Confucian country and now I am a Christian. Who am I?”

The teacher answered: “Think of yourself as a wonderful large tree, with many roots, the more roots you are, the larger the tree and the shade you can give others.”

This has been my mantra since I heard that story.

May our roots be deep, may our primary root continue to  
grow,  
and may we compassionately care for all beings.

ko shin, a name given to me by my teacher, following the  
study of the Buddhist precepts, meaning, “boundless heart”

May all beings be ones of boundless heart.

### **Top of the trees to you!**

Up here, at the top of this eighty foot tree maybe taller,  
we trees don't measure the way the human creatures do  
You see the sun and feel it,  
The beautiful creatures that fly and climb  
Find comfort in my branches and needles

Some even beck a hole and store things  
You feel the storms, the winds, the rain, and snow  
Sometimes the lights come down and rip your arms from  
the body

It seems like the human experience  
The beauty of all the universe, of all creation  
Is plotted by the pain of violence, natural disasters  
Our own greed and want of power over that which  
We have no power...

Hey top of, the trees to you  
Can we learn from the trees?  
From our interconnectedness with all created beings?

It is not the question can we, but will we!  
What is our sight, through a cloud of wishes?  
Or a clear sky of hope

Greed, Power, Control

When is the last time these desires showed up in our  
 moments and lives?  
 Oh, not you, you say  
 Quick, look in the mirror  
 "Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who is the freest of us all?"  
 And the mirror breaks in little pieces  
 Got the message?

Oh my god, it's not a judgment  
 It is a review  
 Reality  
 Top of the trees to you my friend  
 Just place yourself there a moment, this moment  
 Feel the wind, a clear blue sky, and creatures  
 Nesting in your branches, in your trunk  
 No greed, no violence, no power

Compassion  
 That's all there is, the end of another day, tired yet  
 energized by the  
 Possibility of the "top of the trees" to you all!  
**I call them, "Neshkoro Pops"**

what does it mean to be beyond the church?  
 beyond a reality that is of the spirit, yet seen in human  
 terms...  
 in the moment, there is no beyond only now,  
 now, what do I do, now?

-  
 who am I,  
 sitting in Starbucks  
 Harley hat, writing,  
 "Marvin?" the voice says,  
 one looks, no, I am not Marvin,  
 who am I in this moment?

-

cloudy and gray  
the clouds continue to move  
happiness for all

-

the future, not the moment,  
is on my mind,  
the path has no ending, no map,  
so, where will I go next?  
this is faith, not belief, but a trust in this moment, for the  
next

-

Gandhi  
story of Indian king  
define peace  
old sage - grain of wheat

-

thoughts become words,  
behavior,  
habit,  
values,  
destiny

-

## Cornel University, Art Museum

Twentieth century artists surround me,  
 strange but real images,  
 some I do not know what they are or mean,  
 yet, is this the moment, or just a fog?

Miro, Picassos, others,  
 some look like grandchildren's work,  
 some I wonder about.  
 Yet, what was their feel in the moment they made these  
 creations?  
 That raises a question for me,  
 how do I express this moment?  
 Each moment of my life?  
 Witness does not hold it, yet it is part.  
 These painting are a witness to a moment, that moment.  
 Now is now.



*Photo from <http://www.palestinianmothers.com/>*

### Poem to Palestinian Mothers

yesterday in response to a picture of rockets landing on  
 children and families, supported by the government of the  
 USA:  
 trails of smoke



falling into my village  
 not the trails of angels but of violence  
 against my family, my neighbors,  
 even those I do not get along with  
 why?  
 why?  
 why?  
 trails of smoke from the rockets  
 killing the innocents  
 trails of smoke in the sky  
 run for cover  
 pray for peace, yes, peace  
 and maybe quiet...

### **Yes, there are many kinds of books**

Sacred ones, funny ones, some good some not so good  
 Sitting in the coffee shop of Barnes and Noble

A sister down the way, covered in respect  
 Reading her Koran during Friday Prayer time

Hindu and Buddhist Journals at my side  
 A Palestinian poet in my hands  
 What a world!

Oh, that all this could bring peace everywhere  
 Not discord and violence

People of the book, the path, the mystery

Who is reading the sacred writings these days?

Who listens to the winds of the four directions?

Who allows the smoke of the incense  
 or the pine, tobacco, sage,  
 Carry our prayers and chants in the four directions?

Who wants to be free?

Yes, the sister has a highlighter in her hand  
 Maybe you and I are highlighters of the sacred, the  
 Spiritual paths...  
 Highlighting the sacred word  
 To remember  
 To listen  
 To come back to the source

Yes, we are called back in every moment  
 To whom we are  
 To sacred words  
 To loving words  
 To challenging words  
 To directive passages  
 Be more human, love your neighbor  
 Be more compassionate, do unto others  
 Just to be, yes to Be...

## **A Path**

A path  
 a way in the forest  
 where does it go?  
 where is it coming from?  
 mystery, freedom

Life decisions  
 a path that does not stop or end  
 it is just the next step, one by one...

Fear is real  
but what of my dreams  
step back  
be quiet  
let go and go forward  
trees, needles, leaves  
a life line, a path that has no ending  
just a circle...

How does one keep the silence?  
moving through a noisy day?

Just sit brother  
Just sit sister

listen....

Where is Home?  
always, the path is under my feet and ahead  
a new beginning each moment, each day  
like the tunnels under the lawn, new ones every day  
the path, the moment, life is exploding

A bird calls out  
the earth is dry and red  
changing colors  
yes, new life, take it!

**All is interconnected**

How come we try to disconnect all the time  
 Race, culture, religion  
 Maybe the place we are in when we hear  
 “Spirituality” is a better place  
 But the word, people  
 get upset- they cannot turn off their cognitive self  
 And let their mind float like the spirit  
 And be the truth  
 Not say it...or figure it out, or compare it,  
 which is better or stronger  
 Tough shit folks, hate to remind you all,  
 we are all inter-connected, ONE  
 One human family with the universe  
 One universal being with all the creatures  
 and stars of the universe  
 Created in the face of our mother, God

**Conversations are wonderful**

With anyone, even strangers  
 We seem to know one another  
 Although we have never met  
 What do you suppose that is?  
 Humanity?

**Books draw us in**

Pages filled with ink  
 Watch out!  
 Something might change you...

**Early morning fog**

Is more than a blanket  
 Yet one realizes  
 The beauty behind the fog  
 As we realize the beauty behind the person we dislike

**They look like two rocks**

No, they are larger than that  
 Small rock formations in the passage  
 One has been carved by time as a miniature city  
 Oh, what nature can do when we leave it alone

**Rings around the mountains**

Like wedding rings  
 A ceremony of the earth  
 It's relationship to all the universe  
 The sun now breaks through  
 A beam of life  
 A hope  
 Not for just a nice day  
 But the symphony of the earth and all the sky

**Realization**

Enlightenment

Nirvana

Great effort goes into these for you and me

This morning, the fog, the sun breaking through

The mountains and hills everywhere, the water

Peace

Reminds one of an old Zen adage

"Before enlightenment I chopped wood and carried water

After enlightenment, I chopped wood and carried water"

Under, behind, above the fog of our journey is light...

The Buddha dwells

In all the universe

**Coffee spills all over everything**

Early in the morning

What a way to start a journey

Well ko shin it has begun

Enjoy

It is all you have - covering your bag, your seat

I can't place the coffee back in the cup

You just must drink in the moment...

**The land below the plane**

Changes every moment  
 What a universe  
 Listen to the beat, see it  
 The land  
 The sea  
 The clouds  
 Breathe in, breath out...  
 Live

**Eyes**

Yes, it is those eyes  
 That draw you in,  
 Not the hyper moves,  
 Like pine trees in a strong wind...  
 Beautiful, clear, small eyes,  
 Yes, of your grandchildren  
 Maybe not perfect,  
 But sacred as anyone or thing can be...

**At the Museum**

Line  
 Brush marks  
 Symbols  
 Figures appear and seem to fade away  
 You never seem to see the same thing twice  
 Or have the same emotion  
 Art is the emotion of life itself  
 We are all artists, life is the canvas  
 We are the paints, the pencils, and the artist's knife  
 Realization is a path, a journey, not a spot along the way  
 The first step and you are a realized being  
 Yes, you baby, are the enlightenment of all creation, the  
 Buddha, YOU, all!

### **Alaska, a place of beauty**

A pace of contemplation

The Sacred dwells in the ice, the mountains, the hills, and sea

Just sitting on a wet, sunny place called "little island"

The sea lions, exhausted from mating, maybe only mating once

Seem caught up in a communal thing

Competition for a mate, then competition for something more

Sounds like human lions to me

Is our exhaustion our platform for new life, or more of the same?

### **Yolanda**

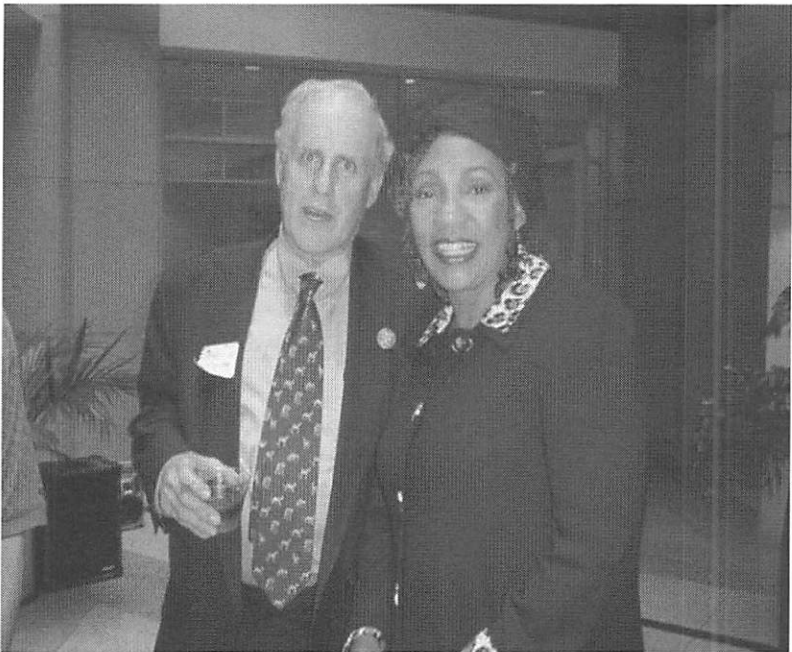
She came to mind recently on the national holiday for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the extraordinary civil rights leader, who set the stage for a new understanding of what it means to live as a diverse, inclusive society.

Of course, up my way, in the woods of east central Wisconsin, the schools, banks and businesses are open, they have not caught on what honoring the past means, unless it is about "their" people.

I was reminded of getting to know the daughter of Dr. King, Yolanda, a creative wonderful soul who passed in her early 50's. She kept talking about her daddy as we ate together one evening, I remember thinking her daddy was Dr. King.

Then I thought of my daddy, a country preacher who could pack a punch, but a humble man...short but powerful, he had to look up at me when he slapped my mouth when I said something I should not have...but what a witness dad was.

But then I thought of Kathy Brewster, Ceil Brown, Jim Groppi, James, Lynette, John, Connie and Clifford Brown, Bonhoeffer, Hildegard, Jesus, the Buddha, Roko my Buddhist teacher, my parents, my children, my family, on and on, the group is so large, yet right here for me...the sacred Council, you have one too...listen! Thanks Yolanda, you are missed, as is your Daddy.



*Yolanda King and Bob at a IRC event in Syracuse where she performed.*



**It is incomprehensible, the tragic events of the earthquake**

I still smell the smells of New Orleans after Katrina...  
 No more, please...I can see the death on the shore line of  
 the tsunami in South East Asia  
 The coffee plantations of Sumatra destroyed...  
 Ha, ha Starbucks, raise your price again, but do not give  
 more to the farmer  
 I remember the streets of Detroit, eleven tornadoes in a few  
 moments  
 The trees are gone, the poor lost everything

Yes, welcome Haiti, I will never forget the pain, the loss,  
 the fear, the needs...  
 It's not the will of God, shut up, its nature out of control,  
 the plates under the earth  
 Move at will, we try and move in control and have lost it  
 again...  
 Stand tall, be comforted by the loving spirit of this world  
 and all creatures who care for you  
 Ignore the wingnuts, the haters, the jerks...we pray for you  
 in your pain and loss,  
 Your history of oppression and fighting for justice, we will  
 continue to walk with you,  
 Now and always

It is incomprehensible, the tragic events of the earthquake  
 What is important in this life?  
 This event reminds us, human life is, relationships are,  
 serving the neighbor is our task

**Death is everybody's business, right?**

Yet we act like we're surprised!  
 Yes, earthquakes, accidents, the big C and others  
 Come when we are not planning to die or have a friend die,

Yet why are we so unprepared?  
 Could it be, we don't trust the way it is?

Death is everybody's business, right?  
 A movie I saw tonight  
 "Cherry Blossoms", weird but true...  
 A woman dies, the wife, mother, suddenly and  
 Her husband goes on a journey to find her, in her native  
 land  
 She never visited...weird, but true, the dance of connecting  
 In the face of Fuji, the lake, the shore,  
 They connect, he dies, freedom for them, but not the kids...

Death is everybody's business, right?  
 Watch out, you just said, shut up!  
 I don't want to die, watch out  
 That's when the angel of death comes flying in...  
 With a smile on her face...  
 Why are you so unprepared?  
 That's why we say, live the moment, why not? Yes, it could  
 be the first of the next life...are you ready?

## 911

Some say a hole in the ground  
 Others a burial place  
 A tragedy yet a wakeup call  
 For all human kind  
 Look what hatred and fear do to others  
 What will our response be?  
 Where are the towers?  
 Anyone see the towers?  
 A moment of silence for all souls lost this day  
 In this hole, only the dust of human life  
 When will we learn? When will we listen?  
 When will we hope?

**Reading the obituaries**

have you done that lately?

Your name, is it there?

Hope not, mind isn't either?

Let me know...call my cell,

It will work in the deep, deep, ground...right?

**Tradition, it happens often and with some regularity**

Listening to the Dalai Lama, live from India

A story that has been told for 600 years

Every people have a story

The injustice is that often we stop people from telling the story

We force them to hear our story

The story of oppression

Who am I anyways?

I find that the issues, the ideas that turned my wheel in the past

No longer have much meaning for me...

The story seems to be a changing

I have thought about the reality called "cloud of witness" comes to mind often

who are the voices that speak to me on this journey called life,

On the path I have chosen to talk spiritually?

## **We search and pray for balance**

in all things in our lives  
in the life of our world  
peace is all we search for  
even when it seems impossible  
when will we learn?  
when will we learn?  
I often find the quiet of the place I dwell,  
almost unreal, so quiet, so beautiful  
when others must look out for violence entering their  
space...  
where is our balance as a world?  
leaders bragging, they broke the laws of human rights,  
tortured others in our name,  
and we do nothing, our new leaders *seem* to do nothing...  
we see it happening then we argue about arguing  
when will we learn?  
where is the balance?  
oh, it is here, where? you ask  
search in your heart, that light, the Buddha within  
yes, the balance comes, the peace begins with me,  
with you, with the Sangha, the community of spirit,  
whatever the path...begin to live your path for, in, peace...

**I bet you enjoy a beautiful sunset or sunrise, I do**

During these winter days, short as they are trying to grow longer

The sun, shining through the bare tree and pines, is quite a sight.

I am always searching for a family of deer or other forms of nature. They remind us daily, they were here first.

I am trying to get hold of the meaning of that feeling, an emotion, a sense, the kind that brings tears to your eyes for no reason,

at least not sadness or loss...but wonder.

I watch the tube, the TV, the HD whatever it has become.

I see what is happening on the Mall in DC, people suddenly dancing,

the joy, the high emotions, the diversity in the crowd

and I am moved to tears, reminding me of the beauty of this creation.

This is not foolishness,

or a feeling brought by the moment itself, but much more...

It is a real feel, a sense...

a sense of hope, of "we can," " things might change" ...

The Buddha is helpful here, he teaches,

"Live in the moment everyone, not in illusions of the future or running from the past."

Skillful and un-skillful living comes to mind...

Will we act skillfully in all we do as citizens, government, or an administration,

or continue a seemingly conscious program of unskillful actions, actions of violence, torture, and distrust...

Maybe that is the feel, the sense, I am pointing to in myself.

I believe in this moment, this hope is real.

I hope you do too.

Not for the feel-good but for the future of the earth!

Suddenly, I remember where I am. "May I have your right hand," the guard in the lobby asks me as I enter, stamping my hand with ink you cannot see except under a special blue light...

This is not the senior dance, but entrance to the prison blocks, my hand to be checked at least twice before I leave...

Sitting in silence, in zazen, with my dharma brothers, while the world celebrates...lives a life of freedom? Or another kind of cell, prison, cells of greed, violence to our neighbor, fear...

We are told this is a new time.

When will their new time come?

Yes, when they learn to be skillful in all they do, say, and think...

Yet, are we housing people who did unskillful things and hurt folks

or, like our government, our nation, our communities, are we willing to empower transformation with all the risk it takes?

Encourage skillful means in the prison cells, so that eventually all will be free...

I have found, at least on my journey...

Zazen, meditation, silence, focus on the breath, quiet is what finally creates the new earth.

Not the magic of an outside force or spirit coming in to fix it for us,

but we are the fixers of our own being, grasping, now, in ourselves the spirit that is us, our being.

This is not perfection we search for in ourselves or others,  
but for skillful means, actions and peace. It is time to listen  
to our spirits my sisters and brothers of this wonderful and  
troubled universe, remember our sisters and brothers of the  
Dharma, in their cells, not so different from our own  
cells...Freedom, shout freedom, and  
we are beginning again, and again, and again...Peace...

### **The colors of the trees**

Are changing

The early hues of orange, red, and brown

Harken a new season is coming

They say I am in the autumn years of my life

Yes, I am getting shorter, but change color?

Only what hairs are left!

We think in terms of minutes, seconds, and years

Oh, that we had the freedom to think in decades,

Centuries, and beyond as the old oaks do behind my home

Yet, wait, we do...

This journey never ends either,

Just continues, another plain

**Foggy time**

The fields and road are covered  
One cycles along  
Able to see  
But can others see you?  
You wonder...  
Then you see them  
Four deer, young ones  
Playing on the road  
They stop and look your direction  
What are they saying to each other?  
Maybe not a sound but a look  
Then they run off into the brush and wetland  
Nature is such a mysterious power  
Just be in it!





Family dinner, Peace

### **Camp Indian Sands, Thanksgiving time...**

quiet afternoons  
 brown leaves, cool air  
 old trees remind me of my life, bent, rough, but beautiful  
 walk in the woods,  
 the sound of the path

the path is endless, cycle of life, death and new life  
 freedom, the moment,  
 the ice on the water, a firm base but water underneath,  
 knowing when to walk and  
 when to wait

**What a day, What a moment**  
 Thanks and praise to all who made this possible

As we cry out in this moment,  
 The pain of living,  
 The pain of tsunami, of judgment instead of grace...  
 Rejecting some, welcoming others, and not all...

When did Jesus reject anyone?

Why do we?

Called to love, bring justice and peace to our world...  
 Yet so many are left out

Why?

My neighbor, a stranger,  
 Muslim, Jew, Buddhist, Sikh, Hindu, or Jain  
 Lutheran or Baptist  
 Or whatever

Where is the separation,  
 In our hearts and souls  
 Or in our  
 doctrine and interpretation...?

“Never think that I believe I should set out a ‘system of teaching’ to help people understand the way. Never cherish such a thought. What I proclaim is the truth as I have discovered it and ‘a system of teaching’ has no meaning because the truth can’t be cut up into pieces and arranged in a system.” – The Diamond Sutra

For me, my clan, it is the heart and soul that welcomes  
All else is created to separate  
Not to deepen...

I am here today  
To empower the heart  
Of all  
So that Peace can run down like a river...

Join me  
Walk with me  
Guide me  
Help me

But only from the heart and soul of your being  
Not the things that separate us  
Because we are all different

Oh well, what a moment, this one  
Many thanks, but now I must warn you...  
My sisters and brothers on the path...  
Here comes the next one...how will we receive it...  
How will we receive the human being who comes down the  
path to meet us?

God is Good...all the time... All the time...God is Good!

Better than a thousand useless words is one word that gives  
peace.

-Buddha

"There are always people who dare to seek on the margin of society, who are not dependent on social acceptance, not dependent on social routine, and prefer a kind of free-floating existence under the state of risk. And among these people, if they are faithful to their calling, to their vocation, and to their message from God, communication on the deepest level is possible. And the deepest level of communication is not communication but communion. It is wordless. It is beyond words, and it is beyond speech, and it is beyond concept. Not that we discover a new unity. We discover an older unity. My dear brothers, we are already one. (Speaking to a conference of monks from many religions.) But we imagine that we are not. And what we have to recover is our original unity. What we have to be is what we are."

(Asian Journal, 1968 p.308) Thomas Merton



A Meditation Collage

## Wake Up!

It is that sense on interconnectedness with all people, with all nations and with all paths of the spirit that brings new life.

## Wake Up!

Everyone needs to be part of the conversation, all at the table when working for peace and justice.

## Wake up!

How do we, as people who have been a part of historical religious institutions, respect, honor and walk with all people who are deeply spiritual beings outside the context we know and think is our spirituality?

## Wake Up!

How do we renew and transform deadly old religious structures, to be the spirit force they are meant to be?

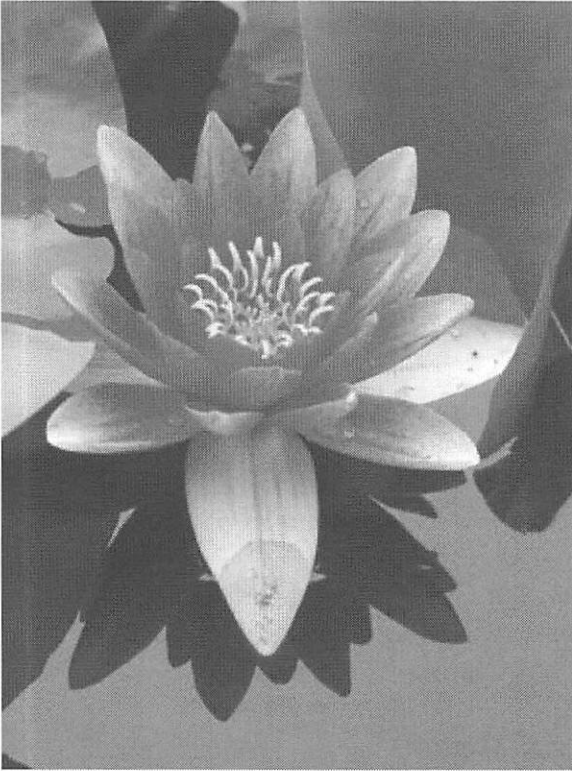
## Wake Up!

Peace! How can we bring all views to our table, the table of the universe, and honestly broker, empower peace when our governments and religious leaders often block this conversation?

## Wake up!

The elimination of racism is a primary battle that still needs to be fought. It reminded me, nothing has changed. What are we going to do? Connected to this struggle are the issues of inclusion in terms of gender, sexual orientation, age, and those challenged by body and mind.

Wake Up! These are times, we are the people.



*I am sure  
I saw this  
flower  
peeking out  
of snow,  
deep and  
cold  
no, it was my  
dream, my  
wish...  
wanting  
peace  
peace is  
always  
seeing the  
beautiful  
flower  
peeking out  
at you & I  
saying,  
"peace"*



*a child keeping the flies  
off his head  
hungry, hot, lonely  
what is he waiting for?  
compassion, something  
to eat,  
hope, maybe he does not  
know that word  
what is there to hope  
for...*

*as I gaze on him,  
the pictures from Gaza, today  
and I wonder, where has human compassion and love  
gone?  
in meditation, contemplation, chanting, and prayer  
we can send hope to this small boy and all in places of  
violence  
that there might be peace... we have the power...*





*this bird  
knows,  
knows that  
the snows  
melt  
the bushes,  
the  
flowers,  
the earth  
& sky  
supplies  
her  
needs...*

*why do we worry, I sometime wonder?  
be quiet now, for just a few moments  
listen and you will hear  
the compassion of the universe...  
it is yours, and mine...*

**Oh Lord, what a day**

Everywhere the voice speaks  
In words of violence  
“we will destroy”

No, we will not communicate,  
“we will destroy”

No, we will not speak of peace,  
“we will destroy”

No, we will not work through third parties,  
“we will destroy”

No, we will not listen,  
“we will destroy”

What did you say about karma?

**Where do these things come from...**

Growing older, must be like moving into a state of Vipassana

A deeper form of meditation where everything you have filed elsewhere comes up...

Maybe that is where the stories of wisdom telling come from throughout the creation's history

I don't know I just feel it, like the deep rumblings of the tummy soon after the meal you could have skipped...

I remember...

It was after 8:30 in the morning, there was commotion in the outer office

I walked out in the room filled with emotion, the radio was on, my staff was crying

A plane had hit the towers in NYC

My stepson, coworker's children were in Manhattan, are they safe we asked without speaking?

We felt as a nation, a world, what we all feel at the death of a child, a baby, a loved one...

An emptiness in the bottom of our lives...

**Where did this come from**, amid winter, sunny and warmer than a usual day in 2009?

It's there my sister, it's there my brother, it's there...

Always reminding us of our journey,

Of our compassion,

Of our hope...

**Maybe the question is not, where does this stuff come from?**

**But, what else is there, wherever it is?**

We are all "dhamma brothers & sisters"

Life as it continues will surprise us, not just memories, but who we are

Thank you, whoever I am thanking...can I rest from this stuff for a while? No!

"I am the spirit of where it came from, and I have something to tell you now..."

On a desert highway in India:

bare mountains,

hot sun

green fields

people working, pulling, carrying

third world, *the* world

processions of men, carrying colorful

symbols

going where?

blessing the road?

who knows, spirituality, a path, everywhere

I feel

a strange kind of soulful oneness



Market Place, India

**In retreat...**

At Zen Mountain Monastery,  
The river and the mountain  
All we have is the moment  
    A tree  
    A stream  
Is it being at the river or  
Crossing the river?

In this moment it is both.  
Slowly as the fog lifts from the earth  
In early morning,  
There is some clarity,  
Not as an answer, but a path.

A path to nowhere  
But, everywhere.

At Holy Cross Monastery,  
The chapel walls give out the  
Perfume of incense of ages.

Here too, there seems to be no answers,  
Just a path, "a way"  
A pain of uncertainty,  
A lack of vision or mission.

No past, no future,  
Just the moment...  
Let it all go and be filled.

**Mandela is gone – MADIBA**

A symbol  
A man of his word  
A freedom fighter  
A spirit man

I remember Cape Town SA, 1999  
The Parliament of World Religions  
He came to speak to us  
To be present

That was his gift to all peoples  
Presence  
Speaking to the truth  
Fighting for justice for all  
Just being there  
Present in the moment

The visit to Robin Island  
The guide was there with Mandela  
Seeing the salt mines  
The heat, the dust, the brightness of this desolate Island  
Standing in his cell  
Twenty-seven years he was kept here  
Yet, never lost his vision  
For justice and peace for all South Africans  
Never gave up

Thank you Madiba



*Mandel's Cell for twenty-seven years, 1999  
A holy place of justice!*



HIROSHIMA 2/6/91

WHAT A PLACE TO VISIT  
 WHEN WE ARE IN THE MIDDLE OF WAR!  
 WHY DO THESE THINGS HAPPEN? WHAT  
 DOES HUMAN KIND NEED? JESUS! YES,  
 WHY BE THE AFFIRMATION KNOWING YOU  
 ARE FORGIVEN, SAVED, RESPONSIBLE FOR  
 YOUR LIFE. JUST THINK WHAT HAPPENED  
 HERE + IN MAGAZINE AUG 6/9/91  
 I CAN NOT BELIEVE OR UNDERSTAND  
 WEAPONS OF MASS HUMAN DESTRUCTION  
 HIROSHIMA IS THE RESULT, BUT WE WANT  
 BRING BACK THE SPIRIT OF BROTHERS  
 FAMILIES, + UTICA RES THAT WERE  
 LOST IN MOMENTS! GOD HELP US!  
 GOD HELP ME! I WAS FROM TODAY I  
 HAD FOR A NEW LIFE! AS LEAVE ME  
 + GRASP ME THAT I WANT TO  
 YOUR WILL!

□ □ □ □ □

In retreat, the bombing of Baghdad, a ride on the Bullet Train to Hiroshima, to try and figure this all out. This place where the Atom Bomb killed so many, yet we never learn

**The buildings were very tall**

They seem to go right into the heavens  
 You could watch the speed of the clouds as they went by  
 It was the World Trade Center, July 1, 2001

I was there for a conference of Buddhists  
 from across America and the world,  
 I remember it clearly  
 it was lunchtime  
 I had a box lunch sitting on the plaza looking up  
 almost hurting my neck because I could not bend it enough  
 to see the top of these beautiful creatures  
 the monks from Tibet chanted as  
 Philip Glass played on the piano  
 it was a silent moment, little did  
 we know what would happen  
 on September 11, 2001 at this very place

It was January 10, 2002 visiting the city  
 the first evening, I left my hotel at around 9 o'clock  
 took the subway to the World Trade Center stop  
 when we stopped I got out  
 in front of me was a mesh fence  
 from ground to ceiling  
 holding back tons of cement rubble  
 a lady was sweeping up the dust in a battle that she would  
 never win  
 the air had a peculiar taste to it as you breathe naturally  
 I realized I was not only breathing polluted air  
 I was taking in the remains of thousands  
 coming out of the subway entrance  
 I was met with chaos and noise of the traffic  
 but also of recovery - wandering around  
 these giant trucks and trailers  
 holding parts of the world trade  
 center that had been placed there

looking down into the pit and one saw the destruction,  
the girders that had fallen in the form of a cross  
when the bell tolled out everything stopped  
there was silence as a team of people came  
to recover a part of or a whole body  
a flag was laid over the remains,  
there was an eerie silence  
the bell rang again  
their work continued until the next bell  
we never leave our sisters and brothers  
until they are taken home  
but the sadness of this pit was that many  
of our sisters and brothers  
will never be recovered they might and  
will be part of this place forever...peace



Four Months Later, January 2002 a burial place

**Justice! Who is justice? When is Justice? Why Justice?**

I am elderly, alone, the kids live far from here.  
My neighbor comes by daily to check on me, compassion,  
**Justice!**

I am a young African American man,  
in prison. I need medical  
help, I am not feeling good about myself, the Chaplain,  
Restorative Justice group has helped, giving love,  
forgiveness, **Justice!**

My family and I are refugees from Syria. We are people of

the Book, Muslims. We are grateful to being settled in this country. Thanks to the resettlement folks for their help.

Love, respect,  
compassion, **Justice!**

We meet with the police monthly now,  
it seems to help. Yet,  
in other places young men are shot  
by the police.

How do we  
stop this kind of violence against humanity by the state?  
Listen, conversation, compassion, **Justice!**

It was midnight when they came, the Israeli police. They  
took my husband,  
and burned our home down.

My three small children and I are  
now refugees. We were in a camp  
for three years and finally settled  
in the USA. What is all this talk about walls,  
and hating Muslims and  
others? We are grateful for our new home. **Justice!**

I am a Native person. I never took  
anyone's land or burial grounds.  
The earth machines came.  
They drove right through our burial hill.  
My great, great grandparents are buried there.  
My people want **justice**  
for what happened hundreds of years ago, and recently in  
North Dakota  
with the pipelines. **Justice!**

I am scared. I am in transition.  
I was born a man but for years I have felt

I am a woman. I have started the long process of change,  
but have not  
told my parents. What will my friends say? My church is  
kind of traditional,  
will they embrace the new me? My high school counselor  
has really  
been cool with it all. That's helpful. But I am  
scared...compassion, acceptance,  
and **justice!**

I am confused. So many bad, terrible things happening to  
people, to our earth.  
Where is God anyways? I hear a "christian" pastor say that  
people demonstrating  
for justice are lucky they don't get shot in the head. Is that  
what Jesus taught and lived?  
A president that grabs -----, and calls his detractors  
names, and he calls himself  
A leader! What the hell is going on. A neighbor and I had  
coffee the other day, she  
didn't argue with me, she just listened. Asked some good  
questions, I feel better now...  
**Justice!** Compassion! Love!

**"Watch out what you look for, you might get anointed"**

I have been reminded that often we go looking for something

we lost and find something we were not expecting. Ever have that happen? One is reminded of the story of Saul and the lost donkeys in Samuel 9 & 10. Saul was sent with a servant to find the lost donkeys. He looked everywhere with no luck. They heard of a man in a near village who was a prophet who saw visions. They decided to search him out for help. The prophet Samuel was pressed to find a king. Guess what happened? Saul found his donkeys and was anointed king.

The moral of the story is: "watch out what you are looking for, you might be anointed king!"

I wonder how this works for community? We search for something that is lost and find a new powerful and wonderful vision. The neighborhood loses its character and in the midst of that loss finds a new diversity. We lose some of our security and find new and creative ways to strengthen our lives together.

Often in the midst of the pain and suffering of loss and confusion

We are anointed by the spirit of compassion, peace, and justice. Keep looking...

## **Listening to Creation...**

Have you ever watched the ocean as it comes into shore? Right where the margin, where the water meets the land, there is transformation. It starts subtly - tiny grains of sand shift position by a millimeter. But the overall effect is dramatic. Ripples of sand become huge shorelines that grow and shrink over time. The tide comes in and goes out, and there is a sense of never ending movement.

I get that same sense of shifting sands in our work together for justice. Sometimes it feels like we haven't moved more than a millimeter. Sometimes we back up and notice that the whole coastline has changed. But lately, it's been the unending, cyclical nature of this work that I've been noticing most. The shifting sands feel like insecurity. In my experience, the shifting sands sensation is not insecurity but vulnerability. We are secure in the knowledge that justice work is moral and right. But you and I together with others serve those who are most vulnerable. We empower the voiceless, those who are often left behind by our fast-moving society. In doing this, we become vulnerable. I think of the times I have felt exposed and in danger as I've marched for justice. But the greatest danger is not always from the outside in these situations.

As we collaborate for justice we open ourselves to our colleagues and partners and hope of establishing trust in common ground. We are vulnerable, and in some ways, defenseless, against attacks by our friends. Indeed, the fear, anger, and seemingly impossibility of doing justice can cause us to lash out at each other. It's easier, quite frankly, to fight someone who's weakness you know, than is to fight a faceless system or structure. We must be strong in our commitment to be allies to each other in our pursuit of justice. Allies are honest with each other. Allies can hear



and understand that we come from different places and have different opinions and beliefs. Allies stand together in the face of ancient wounds and century-old conflict, when it seems like there can never truly be peace, when it feels like there can never be a just solution. Our work for justice cannot solve all of the problems in our community, much less in the whole world. But the work does transform lives – yours and mine, and those we serve. Tiny grains of sand, moving just a millimeter at a time, over and over again change the universe. I write this to encourage us all to be strong on the path of transforming our communities and world. And the breaking down of the structures that often encourage the misuse of power, the abuse of others, hatred, and racism.

A fallen tree,  
ground cold,  
hope comes in the sunlight,  
freedom!

I wonder when we will wake up. Oppression continues, people are affected by racism, by intolerance, and the lack of justice. Many searching for a common path, one answer to all this yet, we are called, I believe, to realize we are one human race. Then we each practice our spiritual care. In many ways we are different, that is the gift, our practice, or our practices although having some of the same goals are not the same. It is from realizing this that we can begin to walk together in harmony and work together for peace and justice.

In visiting the Zen Mountain monastery, a monk who talked to our group before we did chanting and sitting, quoted Thomas Merton. Merton wrote, “If you want your life to be spiritual you have to unify your life. Your life is either all spiritual or not spiritual at all.” How is it you and

I unify our life? Some would say a doctor or a historical way of doing our practice to bring that unity. For some maybe history itself is shaped by unexpected intrusions into our routine thoughts or actions. September 11, 2001, was certainly one of those intrusions, but so is the birth of a child. The rising and setting of the sun can be the kind of event that sets you and I on a new path.

In the Christian tradition, the Jesus story is that kind of intrusive event. As Paul Tillich reminds us, grace breaks into our lives, it asks nothing, it tells us to do nothing, but to accept the fact that we are accepted. Accepted as we are. The word perfection does not even appear in this human event. Whatever our faith or practice path, as humans we have had these kinds of moments in our life. Maybe later we are asked to commit an act, but at that moment we are only asked to accept this moment. The past is gone, the future is not yet, it is now, this moment that heals only when our day-to-day lives are open to intrusion, then we realize our whole life is spiritual.

**There was an old cartoon of Charlie and Lucy**

Charlie Brown and Lucy were out on the hill.

The moon is full and clear.

Lucy asks Charlie, you see any other world out there  
Charlie Brown?

Charlie answers timidly, no Lucy. She pushes him again,  
are you sure there are no other worlds out there, Charlie  
Brown? No, he answers again. Lucy shouts at the top of her  
voice, “well, live in it Charlie Brown!”

You see any other world out there? I don't either.

But I sure wish there was one.

How do we handle what is going on in our country and  
world these days?

Poverty, racism, white supremacy, violence by the state,  
fear of nuclear war and more  
seems to be where we are going as a universe.

It is time that we equip ourselves with the tools of  
compassion, love, peace, and justice.

Red, brown, yellow leaves – signs of fall

New seasons, wonderful sunsets, harvest, giving thanks.

In the midst of grief, pain, and loss, where is hope, the earth  
responds.

New seasons, wonderful sunsets, even though we lose and  
we mourn, there is hope.

It seems that silence is a healing time if we take the time.

## **A Documentary of bad memories**

They say it's healing  
to watch this documentary  
on Nam, the war  
well done they say,  
so why not?  
I tried  
oh, I sat there  
hoping I would doze off  
but the black and white pictures  
the bull shit of the politicians,  
the lies and half truths,  
the blood, pain, and loss  
of the vets, the soldiers then  
the people of Nam  
accustomed to sitting in meditation,  
honoring the dharma, the universe  
being the collateral victims  
of a colonizers war  
yet, I know and feel  
the pain and the craziness going on  
in the minds of our veterans  
the documentary  
brings back things we want to forget  
but can't.

where is the healing?

Life is a hard battle anyway. If we  
laugh and sing a little as we fight the  
good fight of freedom, it makes it all  
go easier. I will not allow my life's  
light to be determined by the  
darkness around me.

Sojourner Truth

**Boat for sale**

(Woodland Pattern Poetry Marathon, January, 2018)

Reflections of  
 A warrior poet, muse,  
 Who is not at the end  
 But at the beginning, again  
 Of what? you ask  
 I don't know,  
 All one knows is that some things come to a end  
 And there is a next step but  
 Not a final ending  
 Maybe just a new act, or scene, or something

Been thinking about the day of the dead, too

Believe me you do think about death when older  
 Speak in the past tense...remembering is difficult...

Days of the dead are days of remembering those who have  
 moved on,  
 In Japan, it is called Obon  
 The rituals, the poetry, the music, the food  
 Reconnecting with those who have moved on  
 They actually sense a re-visit during obon by their  
 ancestors  
 Then they return at the close to the Other World, after  
 Obon  
 Crossed over  
 Are on the other side again

But when one moves from one part of life  
 To the next there is a crossing over

Ok, I have crossed over  
 I am not sure where I am

Do you know where you are?

Not an address,  
It seems like a being place

Ole and Lena weren't sure either on their honeymoon  
Joke time: Ole and Lena just married, travel towards  
Minneoplis  
For their honeymoon. Ole placed his hand on Lena's knee  
She blushed and said "Ole, you can go further" and  
Ole drove to Duluth.

Going farther can mean many things...

Lorca wrote about a poet in New York City  
But he wondered  
Is New York City the poet  
Or is the poet New York City

I am a warrior poet back in the city again  
The muses speak louder here

It's been the forest, the Sand Hill Cranes  
Fat wild turkeys and the red necks

But Now who does one  
listen too or hear?

I am being chased like all of us  
almost daily by the spirits  
the deep ones, the dark ones,  
"Duende"  
The wildness, the calm, the unusual  
the frightening, and the hope  
As I experienced  
in Spain Month or so ago watching the dancers,

hearing the guitar and deep songs

Yet, my body does not work as well now  
Walking, sleeping, loving, being  
But one continues

This consciousness will not end but  
Maybe the pages will  
But that deep wild spirit will keep moving on

I could bring religious gabily gook to this  
This consciousness  
But it would only slow me down.

Yes they all said it  
Yo, they all lived it  
Oh, they died for it

You know, Buddha, Jesus,  
Mohammad, women and men of the mountains, village,  
seas and the plains, all of them  
they said, live this word of life...  
You have what you need just  
live it!!  
No magic here

OMG I wish I had know that earlier  
Well, now I do  
Now what?

One step at a time

Have you ever run the race?  
Have you ever hit the wall?



I did once running a marathon in the hills outside  
 Hiroshima  
 Grunts from the base, villagers and many more  
 I did about fifteen miles with about ten to go  
 A Japanese brother, was alongside  
 We hit it together  
 Running on rims is how they describe it  
 He did not speak my language  
 Nor I his, but we were one...

So I made a motion  
 Walking and then running  
 So he walked, I ran very painfully and slowly  
 Then his turn, to run a bit  
 And we did this  
 For ten miles  
 Then we turned the last curve on the last incline  
 There were his children and my daughter  
 Way down the path  
 At the finish line  
 We sprinted to the line...  
 Victories of a sort but sore and tired

Victories come in many ways, don't they?

Lorca writes in New York

Que no baile el Papa! No,

Don't let the Pope dance,  
 I am sure  
 Or the king  
 Or the millionaire of blue teeth  
 He might add orange hair  
 Or the dry dancer of the cathedrals,  
 Or builders, or emeralds, or madman, or sodomites

Only this mask  
Mask of old scarlet cloth  
Only this mask!

You get it?  
I know you do...the mask yours and mine

I wish I had a poem to share with you  
This is all I have  
A warrior poet  
In the city again  
Trying, with pain and all  
To walk those paths again  
To find something new, hey,  
Let's walk together, ok?

Ole died, sorry to have to tell you.  
Lena was asked by the funeral director what she wanted in  
the obituary.  
She responded, "Ole Died". The funeral director said, "But  
Lena you get five words free."  
Lena said after some thought, "Ole Died. Boat for Sale."

**Back to the City...**

Final moments  
Final times  
Tonight is our final sleep in the woods  
As two elder warriors  
Shuffle ourselves back to the city

Living in the woods for fourteen years  
Waking to the conversations of the sand hills  
The noisy wild turkeys, fat as they are  
And the beautiful deer, their coats changing color with the  
seasons

Oh, we will be back  
To prepare our home for the market  
But we will be gone

In troubled times  
With an orange hair presenter  
With fear of deportation, nuclear war,  
Racism, hate, separation, and poverty  
Where else but in the urban  
Made many moves in my life  
At one point I had lived in forty-four addresses on earth  
So what's another one?

Good question  
No answer

Maybe its my age  
My physical being  
Falling apart and falling down more

Or its this retirement bullshit  
Fourteen years of volunteering

In the DOC  
 Fifty-two years and going since my ordination  
 Yes that could play a part

It's the *WeCrock app* from Bhutan or Nepal

It goes, if you think of death five times a day  
 You will be happier  
 Five times a day or more I get a little message  
 About death  
 I have concluded: it happens!

Oh well  
 Whatever this sense of nothing is  
 It's wonderful  
 Why worry  
 The end is only a beginning

The streets  
 The avenues  
 The highways  
 You could spend your time just going

Thinking of the Diamond Sutra  
 Foundational chant of the path of Buddha  
 How does one bring the five eyes of the practicing one  
 To the city...

The Human Eye, seeing the beauty in nature, the lake, the  
 paths,  
 Trees, flowers and all humans  
 We see and feel the emotions of the moment, the place, the  
 tribe,  
 Or flock

The Divine Eye, seeing in darkness, through the blocks of  
life

Your own life and others

Not frightened, but *skillful*

Seeing and acting through the obstacles

The Eye of Understanding, we hide so often but with this  
eye again

Experiencing yourself in the eyes of others

Finally, the Eye that sees the Past, Present and Future as  
one, THE MOMENT!!

The seeing, all happens in a moment

You don't plan beauty or pain, wonder or chaos, and  
violence

It is there before us, we try to deny

But cant step away

The City

The Urban

The Diversity

The In-Justice

The Fear

The Misunderstanding

A friend asked me recently

Hope you are not going to the war zone Bob...

Could've hit him, but for what

I reminded him of my love for Milwaukee

And all that it is...

Where else does one go

But to those places where life is hard, violent, and hopeful

But you and I know the city, the urban, is the foundation of  
humanity

A collage of humanity in one place

A place of arts, music, dance, and service

Now we are here

Back in the mix

Loving it

Wondering how will it be

Never thought of going back

But now we are back

Hardly anything changed

Race, abuse, violence seems to be deeper

Yet also a new hope

For what you ask?

I don't know right now

Morning rise, a look over the lake

Frozen now in some places

Open in others

Like our community

Frozen in time

Yet a few open to whatever, the future

A new path for this warrior poet

Retired does not hold it

A colleague reminded me recently

When we go after bad actors we fail

But it is when we take on bad systems

Things radically change

How true

Not simple

It does not bring back the seventeen  
Murdered in their high school  
But it wakes us up

This has torn me apart  
But something else did too  
My friend's son died  
The night before Valentines

No words, even poetic ones  
Can comfort  
Can make it better  
Can take away the pain

A few times in my life  
I have felt blank  
As a poet  
As a priest  
As a father  
As a lover

Just blank

I have reflected since these traumatic events  
In my journey  
About silence  
The power of silence and healing  
The silence of the temples in Japan  
When I lived there  
Often the silence in the midst of conversation  
With my Japanese friends

A rock garden within the temple  
Has only a few rocks, maybe only one  
Yet, in the eastern mind  
The garden is full

My mind  
My soul  
Is quiet  
Silent

My friend's son died  
My friend is very sad  
I give you my silence, then we will talk

The prophet Isaiah spoke with a loud voice, "Shout out do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of (your word here) their brokenness"

He talks about folks who practice for gain not for justice  
Then they wonder why doesn't God come and recognize our goodness?

Sound familiar?

Called to speak up  
Called to demonstrate  
Called to organize

It's all about practice  
It's all about being justice  
It's all about being freedom

Many states are now trying to pass laws  
To make the words of Isaiah illegal  
You go to jail  
Or as in Isaiah's day, killed

It's all about practice  
Not laws, dogma, violence



Against the rights of all beings

Where do you live?  
 What's your new address?  
 The unjust laws for registering to vote  
 First time back in the city,  
 I end up a provisional vote number two  
 In district 181  
 Milwaukee, Wisconsin

I asked the lady serving me  
 How does it feels to be  
 Supporting an unjust laws  
 Created by asshole Walker  
 To limit the poor, people of color  
 And people like me who brought the wrong bill with my  
 new address?

No answer, an excuse...

"I Can't Breath"  
 My t-shirt announces  
 Someone said they would pray for me...  
 An old Walker supporter  
 Gave me breathing rules for meditation  
 As we sat together in a prison  
 An elderly lady in NYC  
 Said to me as I crossed the street  
 "I have bad asthma too"

What's with it folks?

*The duende is a monetary burst of inspiration,  
the blush of all that is truly alive, all that the  
performer is creating at a certain moment.  
The duende resembles what Goethe called the  
'demoniacal'.*

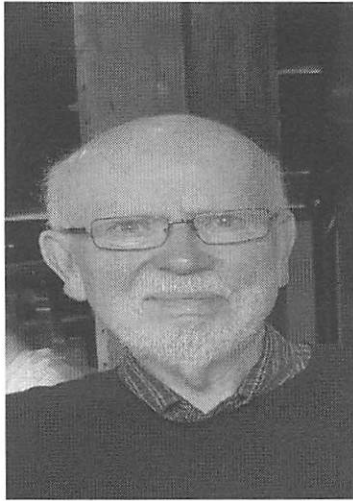
*It manifests itself principally among musicians and poets of  
the spoken word, rather than among painters and  
architects, for it needs the trembling of the moment and the  
a long silence.*

The words of Federico Garcia Lorca, from, In Search of  
Duende, A New Direction Pearl, 1998 edition, page viii

At the end of the dance,  
there is a silence,  
there is sweat, but also tears.  
One's heart is beating unusually quick,  
even though you have not danced a beat,  
you perspire.  
Deep bows of thanks for spending some time with me,  
my muses, my deamons, and spirits.  
Its time for you to listen, the spirits have something to  
say...

Peace  
Compassion  
Love  
Justice!

Thanks to Duane Berry who helped me with the final edit  
of this book. Again, helping me to look better than I am.  
Thanks Duane.



Roger Sween

**Roger is my life long friend.**

Earlier in this book I mentioned all the people that this project is in memory or honor of, family friends and colleagues.

I love them all.

But Roger is a special friend.

Third Grade is probably where we met, school and church.

Confirmed together, roommates in college for a year,

I was honored to sing at Pat and Roger's wedding in  
August, 1962

And we have been in contact since.

He has worked on three of my book projects and helped me  
look better than I am.

This time he was doing some medical stuff and I can report  
is on the mend.

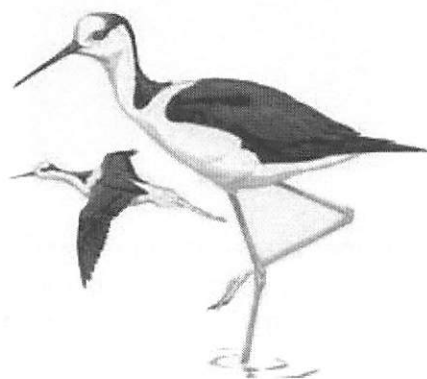
This one is for you Roger, friend, brother poet.

Thanks for continuing to walk this journey with me and for  
all you

mean to you family and friends.

It's not over yet bro, keep on keepin on!

Love, Peace, Compassion for all!



A bird doesn't sing because it has an answer, it sings  
because it has a song. - Maya Angelou



61480792R00085

Made in the USA  
Columbia, SC  
23 June 2019

WE SEARCH AND PRAY FOR BALANCE  
IN ALL THINGS IN OUR LIVES  
IN THE LIFE OF OUR WORLD  
PEACE IS ALL WE SEARCH FOR  
EVEN WHEN IT SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE  
WHEN WILL WE LEARN?  
WHEN WILL WE LEARN?  
I OFTEN FIND THE QUIET OF THE PLACE I DWELL,  
ALMOST UNREAL, SO QUIET, SO BEAUTIFUL  
WHEN OTHERS MUST LOOK OUT  
FOR VIOLENCE ENTERING THEIR  
SPACE...  
WHERE IS OUR BALANCE AS A WORLD?  
LEADERS BRAGGING, THEY BROKE  
THE LAWS OF HUMAN RIGHTS,  
TORTURED OTHERS IN OUR NAME,  
AND WE DO NOTHING, OUR  
NEW LEADERS SEEM TO DO NOTHING...  
WE SEE IT HAPPENING THEN  
WE ARGUE ABOUT ARGUING  
WHEN WILL WE LEARN?  
WHERE IS THE BALANCE?  
OH, IT IS HERE, WHERE? YOU ASK  
SEARCH IN YOUR HEART, THAT LIGHT,  
THE BUDDHA WITHIN  
YES, THE BALANCE COMES,  
THE PEACE BEGINS WITH ME,  
WITH YOU, WITH THE SANGHA,  
THE COMMUNITY OF SPIRIT,  
WHATEVER THE PATH...BEGIN  
TO LIVE YOUR PATH FOR, IN,  
PEACE...



ISBN 9781720954644



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