



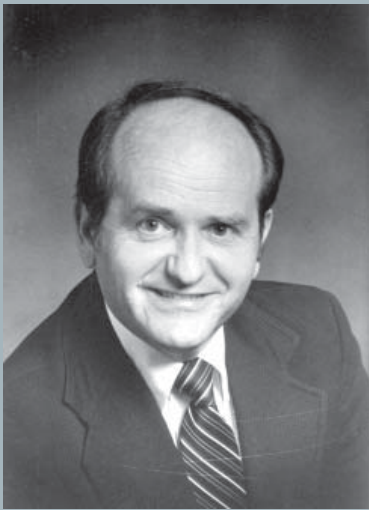
SPARE MULE

Missouri State Poetry Society Newsletter
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Strophes, the national newsletter, is available online at <http://www.nfsps.com/> Click *Strophes* online.

Tom Padgett Tribute Issue



Dr. Tom Padgett

There is not just one Tom Padgett. To some of us he is O Captain! My Captain!, the educator after Professor John Keating in Dead Poets Society, full of muse and contagiousness, a literatus. To others of us he is the wit bringing flash into the living rooms of our day. And then to others yet he is the Ted Kooser of Bolivar, the storyteller of small-town life, of poems about two lawn tractors breeding in a horse trailer, about “a backwoods-country preacher . . . / with straying hair and taxicab-door ears / and yellow shoes evoking yesteryears.”

But this isn't the sum and substance of him either.

It's just a start.

Once he said to me

Stay here, kid, and keep the engine running.

He fell in line behind a lady at the window of the Dairy Mart.

Her hair a hive of pins and clips and curlers.

He turned to me across the gravel parking lot to shout

She can, she says, pick up ships at sea.

He though was the one dialed in. As always.

I slid lower in my seat, grinning.

--Mark Tappmeyer, Second Tuesday, Bolivar

What follows here are voices of tribute.

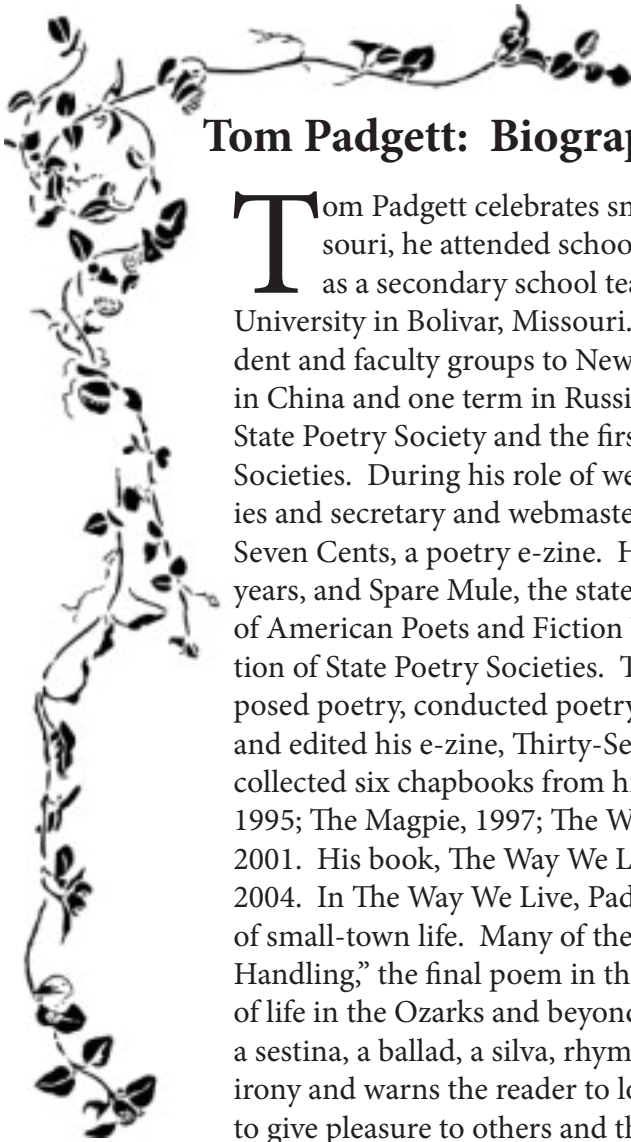
FROM YOUR PRESIDENT:

Seasons Greetings and happy holidays.



Nancy LaChance

When you read this, all of that will be passed and we will be working on keeping our New Year's resolutions. One resolution you might make is to write more POETRY. Send your poems to contests or think about having one published in your local newspaper or a regional magazine. Whatever, just keeping writing. This Spare Mule edition is a dedication to Tom Padgett. I remember meeting him at a Lucidity Poetry in Eureka Springs, Arkansas. I believe he recommended me as secretary of Missouri Poetry Society. From there, I moved to Vice President and then to President of our society. Tom did much to get our group going and I wish to thank him. Tom still submits his poems to contests and some of them are on the funny side, which I really like. Thank you, Tom, that I can count you as a friend. *Cordially, Nancy LaChance*



Tom Padgett: Biography and Professional Accomplishments

Tom Padgett celebrates small-town life in his poetry. Born in Mountain View, Missouri, he attended school there. After university preparation, he taught three years as a secondary school teacher and thirty years as a professor at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Missouri. Besides family trips to all fifty states, he conducted student and faculty groups to New York City, Europe, and Asia. He also taught two terms in China and one term in Russia. He was the founder and past president of the Missouri State Poetry Society and the first webmaster for the National Federation of State Poetry Societies. During his role of webmaster of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies and secretary and webmaster of the Missouri State Poetry Society, he edited *Thirty-Seven Cents*, a poetry e-zine. He also edited the state poetry anthology, *Grist*, for five years, and *Spare Mule*, the state poetry newsletter, for seven years. Listed in *A Directory of American Poets and Fiction Writers*, he served as Chancellor of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies. Throughout his literary and professional career, he composed poetry, conducted poetry workshops, delivered lectures, judged poetry contests and edited his e-zine, *Thirty-Seven Cents*. After retiring from university teaching, Tom collected six chapbooks from his published poems, entitled: *Pets*, 1990; *Prodigal Poet*, 1995; *The Magpie*, 1997; *The Weasel*, 1997; *Barking Backwards*, 1998 and *What Got Me*, 2001. His book, *The Way We Live: New and Selected Poems*, was published in July of 2004. In *The Way We Live*, Padgett, who is primarily a narrative poet, captures the feel of small-town life. Many of the poems are autobiographical, but as he says in "Snake-Handling," the final poem in this book, "a poet is not limited to truth." In telling his tales of life in the Ozarks and beyond, Padgett uses formal patterns such as sonnets, a villanelle, a sestina, a ballad, a *silva*, rhyme royal, blank verse and free verse. He frequently employs irony and warns the reader to look first for the humorous side to his poems. He writes to give pleasure to others and this compulsion to entertain eliminates "messages" in his work. He loves poetry and worked diligently to share that love with others. At Southwest Baptist University, a literary artist series has been established in his honor. Currently, Tom and his wife, Shirley, live in Bolivar, Missouri.

* "A gift by Marjorie Barnett of Wheaton, Missouri, sister of Gene A. Barnett, in honor of her brother and his friend, Tom E. Padgett, has made possible a series of speakers on SBU's campus. The long-term friendship between these men began in September 1948 when both were junior-college students at Southwest Baptist College earning A.A. degree and continuing as both pursued bachelor's degrees at Oklahoma Baptist University, master's degrees (Barnett at University of Oklahoma and Padgett at University of Texas), and doctor's degrees in American literature (Barnett at University of Wisconsin and Padgett at University of Missouri.) Both men became professors of English (Barnett at Wayne State University in Michigan and Farleigh Dickinson University in New Jersey and Padgett at Southwest Baptist University.) When Barnett died in 1999, his sister thought it fitting to establish a speaker series as a memorial to her brother since he established a speaker series at FDU and to honor his friend, Dr. Padgett, for thirty years of service to their alma mater."

(*Citation: "Barnett-Padgett Literary Artist Series" pamphlet)

Tom Padgett Poems

No Rest for the Wicked

The ogres that inhabit fantasies and nightmares of the scholarly are those make the tests—professors—who daily set the scale, disturb the peace, and in general make life difficult.

My student said he had a dream last night in which I quizzed him on a Russian novel he had never read—and worse, it was an oral exam. he had no time to organize the nothing that he knew in hope the structure of his argument might get him through. He smiled (still in the dream) and said the book was great, a novel that would last. “What about the piano part?” I asked. He gasped, “the piano part?” “Yes, the accompaniment.” (Evidently the editor of his dream did not require it to be consistent or even make sense.) He stabbed, “The piano was superb.” I scoffed. He woke in sweat, upset when I informed him the accompaniment had been a solitary violin.

I heard his dream, the broke away to call my dean—we monsters do this sort of thing. I told the dean the dream and asked about my contract. Since I was working nights in nightmares, shouldn't I be getting overtime?”

(Tom Padgett: “The Way We Live: New and Selected Poems”)

Chicory

Along the road to the church
a flourishing ditch of chicory
announces quietly its generous gift
of simple but deceptive summer beauty
for the one who turns aside to see.

Lavender blue blossoms open regularly
and lavishly in twos or threes
on joints of slender stems
that stretch and burst with flowers
almost before they leave the ground.

With fourteen spokes or so,
each one-inch wheel of bloom
adds magic to a waving wand
that levitates mysteriously the spirit
of the one entranced beside the road.

(Tom Padgett: “The Way We Live: New and Selected Poems”)

Snake-Handling

Sometimes I tell the truth.
In spite of artifice to keep it caged,
the serpent slithers out to compromise
a paradise: to breach a fellowship
and fill the air with guilt of knowing death.

More often, a specimen on display
remains encased, rendered safe,
or else arrives approximate, indistinctly marked,
relevantly perfumed, or strikingly defanged.
The garden stays intact.

I live this way.

(Tom Padgett: “The Way We Live: New and Selected Poems”)

The Knave of Hearts

I saw him first among a group of men
Who stood about conversing on the beach.
He smiled and treated everyone as friend
And seemed to be a favorite of each.

I met him later when we stayed to swim,
Though all the others took one dip and lay
To let the summer sunshine dry their skin,
The Gulf of Finland cold that July day,

Then afterwards we showered off the brine
And sat upon a bench beside the fence;
He told me of his dreams and asked of mine,
And gradually he gained my confidence,

A golden knave, polite, and quiet-spoken—
How many lovers will he leave heartbroken?

(Tom Padgett: “The Way We Live: New and Selected Poems”)



TRIBUTES AND POEMS BY MEMBERS



When I think of Tom Padgett, I remember a day at my house in Springfield in 1997. After the untimely death of Jim Stone, acting president of Missouri Poets & Friends, we were clearing up paperwork while deciding whether or not to continue or let the chapter die. We decided to continue and, ultimately, Missouri State Poetry Society was born.



On that day in my house, Tom gingerly and with great dignity let me know my cat had made a “mess” on the couch. Realizing at once the long brown cylindrical item to which he pointed was not what he thought it was, I decided to have some fun with him. I lifted the object in my bare hand and hung it upside down. “Oh, you mean this?” I said, swinging it like a mouse by its tail. Tom gulped and nodded. I swung it at him and, when he declined to take it, said, “It’s just a hair-ball.” I had never seen Tom’s eyes bug out before or witnessed him utterly speechless.

I also remember his wonderful humor, kindness and great Signature Poem which has been posted in my Signature Poems Registry at www.amykitchenerfdn.org for the past ten years. It is the poem in iambic pentameter by which he wishes to be remembered.

Wanda Sue Parrott, Honorary Member, Poets & Friends

POSSUMS IN THE STREETS
(Tom Padgett’s signature poem)

I sing of towns where possums walk the streets,
where cars slow down to let them amble by,
where children come from school amazed that they
are pouched marsupials like kangaroos
and found in dictionaries under O.

For possums are seen frequently by those
who grow to their maturity on farms
or in small towns. They are a common clan
like Gradys, Rileys, Connors, and like them
O’Possums lose distinction from their name.

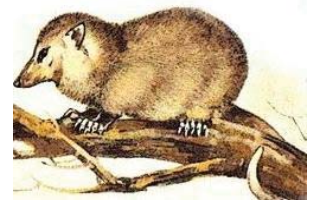
I met a possum first out on the farm
when running rabbit traps and selling furs.
A hissing occupant drove me in fear
to Dad, who showed me how to make it sull
and then play dead before we turned it loose.

I met a possum last two nights ago
when walking here in town for exercise.
A grizzled wanderer crossed in front of me
to scout around the area for food.
He headed vaguely toward my neighbor’s eggs.

Remarkably tenacious in their ways,
the possums have survived an evil world
of hunters, lumbermen, and city folks.
No doubt when we arrive at Heaven’s gates,
there will be possums walking golden streets.

Tom, we love you.

Wanda Sue Parrott,
Monterey, California



Tom Padgett has been a friend and inspiration for me. I first encountered him when I was a student at SWBC (now SBU). His classes were ones I really enjoyed and learned from. I later transferred to MU and graduated from there. I don’t really remember how we re-connected, but shortly after graduation we were talking and the subject of his Jan-term European trips came up. He said I was welcome to come along if I wished. I decided to go with the group in the English Theatre class and literally followed him all across Britain and Europe. The instant we got off the plane, trains, and automobiles, he was jogging off, leaving the rest of the group to catch up or be left behind. His previous trips had paved the way for us to discover a wealth of experiences that would not have been possible without his leadership.

After being out of the area for a few years, we met up again and I joined up with the Second Tuesday chapter of MSPS. I have always looked forward to that day of the month and his leadership in that group. I appreciate all he has done to make the MSPS what it is and all the enthusiasm he has provided for it and Second Tuesday.

Thank you, Tom.

Bill Lower

Marie Asner, Crawford County Bomdadils, Overland Park, Kansas -- Tribute and 2 poems

I knew Tom for several years through correspondence and finally met him in person when I conducted a workshop on Religious Poetry at a MSPS Convention in Bolivar, Mo. Tom was a gracious host for the event and provided much information about Bolivar. The students appreciated his work with them.

Happy Holidays, Tom, and a wonderful 2016 and many, many years beyond.

*Sincerely,
Marie Asner*

THE MOUNTAIN

(for Hot Shot firefighters who died in Arizona 2013)

Each night, when the moon rises, the mountain
waits against a background of dark and remembers...

that place... as though nothing happened,
afternoon sun the same
and rocks holding earth as before,
the graveled road leading to a clearing
and tree tops began to stir

A fiery vibration is in the smoke and stays there
like a ribbon in mid-air, while over the horizon
tomorrow is already awakening...

Fire on the mountains now rises and looks
over the terrain for a place to land its spear,
the seconds as long as centuries...

Death is always a mystery, where it begins
and where it ends...drowning in your breath,
sparks like fireflies now in the tent...

When a fireman dies, people ask the father
and the rest of the crew what their emotions
are as though they are the only ones
with grief...but others left behind
sleep lightly, soon waking
to stare into nothing...silent,
so children won't hear them breathe,
alone being a word
that sits at the back of the mind in a tent of its own.

Prairie Fire

Lightning strikes and orange flames dance
Aa upward spear
propelled by animal voices

Horizon silhouetted in hot ash
south wind rides the clouds in herds
running from a hunter's moon
who with eyes of hot ash
and breath of smoke
can't find his prey



Captain of the Ship, could easily be the title of this tribute piece. Tom Padgett had a hand on the wheel and was in the captain's position as well—for many years. In addition to serving in many MSPS state level office positions over the years, Tom was also active in the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, serving in an office there as well.

I first met Tom many years ago at the Lucidity Poetry Retreat, in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, where he was a presenter/speaker and workshop leader. I always found him to be open to all forms of poetry and diplomatic in his approach as far as getting things done and getting other folks to contribute as well. A funny anecdote: (I don't ever recall Tom drinking an alcoholic beverage in all the many years I have known him, but I was first convinced by Tom to join MSPS at a Micro-Brewery in Springfield; I don't know if Tom set up the tour or not, but they did have great food and it was nice place to have a get-together.) That's where I begin my MSPS journey so to speak. I was always somewhat standoffish when it came to joining organizations, but with Tom's encouragement I became a member-at-large, then later—again with Tom's strong suggestion ... well when the captain calls, what's one to do... I joined up and became a full-fledged enlistee and after rising in the ranks, (forgive my military speak—I served in the Navy) I became president of our local chapter and then over time serving as both vice president and president at the state level. I consider it a privilege to have served, and being a member has meant a lot to me poetically speaking. I know MSPS has helped many folks develop their art form, and I have made many dear friends over the years. None of this would have come about for me, if I hadn't met Tom Padgett, a person I consider a dear friend.

Thanks Tom. -- Dale Ernst

Tom Padgett is one of the nicest, kindest, most thoughtful and helpful people I have ever known. I was present at the Springfield Poets & Friends meeting years ago when he asked our group to provide the seed money to start Missouri State Poetry Society. Tom is the organization's founder and has led it extremely well ever since. I was somewhat bemused by his title for the state newsletter, "Spare Mule," but somehow, it fits. He also taught me how to pronounce the poetry form, triolet. (tree-o-lay). Thank you, Tom, for your energy, enthusiasm and farsightedness in MSPS. We are proud of you and happy to stand alongside.

Lee Ann Russell, Poets & Friends, Springfield

Todd Sukany, Author Unknown, A Tribute Poem

Under a Kilt

*"... the writer knows everything."
Tom Padgett*

Hang the poem
in a way
that exposes
virility
so that
when you
dangle
upside down
on monkey bars
you confirm
its size
and worth.



My first meeting as a chapter member of (then known as) Missouri Poets & Friends, the Springfield chapter and our state's representative to the National Federation of State Poetry Societies (NFSPS), was in the fall of 1997. I had barely walked into the meeting space when I was immediately approached by one Wanda Sue Parrott accompanied by one Tom Padgett. They were soliciting votes for the establishment of a Missouri State Poetry Society (MSPS) to represent all Missouri chapters to NFSPS. I thought, "Sure, why not?"



Tom Padgett and David Thomas, 2007 Convention

The proposal included the loaning of the sum of \$175.00 from our chapter for the purpose of defraying expenses regarding setting up a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation and other related expenses with the loan to be repaid ASAP. The proposal passed with flying colors and within a few short weeks, the \$175.00 loan was repaid surprisingly much sooner than expected!

The driving force behind this movement was our own Tom Padgett, who took it upon himself to do all the paperwork and legwork involved. The Springfield chapter, MSPS founding chapter, later became known as simply Poets & Friends to lessen any confusion with the newly formed state society.

MSPS hit the ground running with current chapters joining and new chapters forming all around our state in no small part due to the efforts of Tom who also saw fit to open a chapter for members at large. Further, he quickly established and published Spare Mule, our state society's newsletter and all along was a double agent being a member of both Poets & Friends and Second Tuesday, Bolivar's chapter, faithfully attending both chapters' monthly meetings as well as serving in official positions in Second Tuesday and of course, MSPS.

I believe I can safely say that MSPS may very well have never existed had it not been for the efforts of Tom Padgett but my fondest memories of Tom were during Poets & Friends' read-arounds. His work was top shelf and ranged from the serious to that which included wonderful wit, hilarious humor and all replete with impeccable delivery. I couldn't wait til it was his turn to read! Where will he take us this time?

For all the reasons above and more, I feel that I can speak for all of us in that our lives are much richer by having crossed paths with one Tom Padgett. Thank you, Tom, for being you.

David J. Thomas
MSPS Past President
Life Time Honorary Member

The Kansas City Metropolitan Verse
Chapter of MSPS,
including Brenda Conley and all the
members, adds our best wishes to Tom.
His dedication to MSPS made it the worthy
Poetry Society it is today.

Thank You, Dr. Padgett!



Making a Retreat

Tom Padgett and I met in the early days of Ted Badger's Poets' Retreat in Eureka Springs, Arkansas. A group of 70 or 80 poets learned about poetry and each other every spring for many years, and I was there from the beginning to offer some ideas on how not to write. Tom came for much the same reason. He was a kind of father figure to a group from Bolivar, Missouri, who made up a thoughtful and raucous gallery. Tom and I early fell into the habit of a quiet afternoon together solving the problems of the world. We would get together and let our thoughts mingle, agreeing or disagreeing, but we found a consensus that was sure to heal all current political, religious, social, and personal problems. And on the lighter side, we would sit at the speakers' table during the poem readings at the final banquet. We had to hide our faces so the poets would not detect what irreverent or jocular remarks we would exchange as each poem was read. Mostly of course, these were constructive observations, but they showed me a side of Tom Padgett that remains with me still.

-- Larry Thomas, Member at Large --

Faye Adams, On the Edge

Founding Father

(A salute to Tom Padgett)

A sharp, active brain
with a humorous vein
and a benevolent mien
plus an extended reign
built a continuous chain
creating constructive gain
on Missouri's poetic plain.

My poem Teaching the Boy needed critique. In group at Lucidity, 2007, we'd run short on time. (Two of my poems had been critiqued by a group. We just did not get to Teaching the Boy.) Tom had been my group leader, and his kindness was immense. On break, I dared asked him if he had time to look at one more poem. He did not hesitate. He was not reluctant. Instead, he invited me to sit and show him the poem. Tom's gift to me that day was making space for me. His love for mankind and his kind acts, immense and frequent and quiet.

I have held this poem close for years. Now, I'm letting it go in honor of the poet who helped me with it.

Tom is a leader of leaders, respectful and kind, but boldly speaking what he thinks. His soft side, always present. He blesses people by his presence. I was blessed to sit at his feet and learn in workshops and lectures.

Thank you, Tom, for just being who you are, for giving and sharing with poets.

Sincerely,

Pat Durmon, Crawford County Bombadils

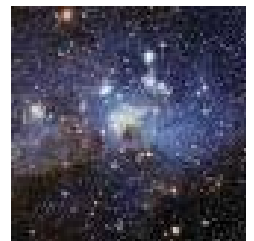
Teaching the Boy

Lost on a back road after dark, I stopped
at a farmhouse, looking for direction.

A handsome woman stepped off the porch.
She seemed to dodge the curved moon.
Her kind words merged with a hand
pointing west, but I turned my head north
toward soft talk on a sloping yard.

There, sprawled on their backs, a man and a boy
lay on a blanket staring skyward,
intent as astronomers on pricks of light
puncturing the sky. Open laughter rose up.
The boy pulled out a pocketful of questions;
the man, patient and poetic, offered
worthy words.

I stayed still and mute. Was I totally lost?
Had I stepped into another world?
Perhaps the woman read my mind.
She had a twinkle in her eye as she said,
*My husband and grandson tell me
they are grazing among the stars. . . .*



POEMS BY MEMBERS

Ralph Acosta, Kansas City
Metropolitan Verse

Heeding the Call

How many times
Heeding the call of
 Something
To leave for
 Somewhere

How many times
Leaving behind
 Places
 Jobs
 Friends

Like a surfer
On the ocean
Sensing the waves
Waiting for
 The right one

Somehow knowing
This is the one
Time to turn
Time to move
Time to flow



Carol Louise Moon, Crawford County
Bombadils,

HER HEART

A hive of memories
busing her mind--a colony of
humming things and singing wings
which beat the chamber walls
each lined with liquid gold, thick
and bold--a person souled with
memories sublime and kind.

CHIMERA

Chimes in dreary distant halls,
chimney dust and chimney crow--
chirp of myth and monsters. Our
chim--chim--cheree found in sweet
childhood dreams dampens into
chimera: crowing words of
chilled, channeled conversation.

Terrie Jacks, On the Edge, DeSoto, Missouri (2 poems)

Almost Absolutely Nothing to Do

There's a verse in me,
I can't get it out.
I'd reach in
but my hand's too large for my mouth.
I give my head a tilt
to see what spills out my ears
nothing tumbles to the table
even earwax doesn't appear.
My third thought, a sneeze
Ooh! The words would be covered in goo,
so I sit here twirling my pen
with almost, absolutely, nothing to do.

Faye Adams, On the Edge,
DeSoto, Mo

Wrong Road Taken

(With apologies to Robert Frost)

Four feet to the sky, he lay
in an attitude of surrender
confessing his sins
of hunger, of greed
of slavery to his quest
for surprise, for enchantment
around the next bend.

The Armadillo found
that life sometimes slings
death and destruction
and the road not taken
would have been the right one
had he known.

Alberta Clipper

or a Flurry in a Hurry

Overnight

an Alberta clipper visited

leaving a trace of snow

with frigid temps

a flurry in a hurry

it's here today

gone tomorrow

Marilyn K. Smith, Poets & Friends, 4 poems

A WINTER'S MORN

Hey, don't you think I should stay in,
On such a day as this,
I mean the drifts are two feet deep,
To drive would not be bliss.

The windshield on my car is froze,
it's like a block of ice,
It'd take a chisel and a pick,
To stay home would be nice.

The roads out here? They may be cleared,
They came and plowed this one.
The roads between? They could be too,
I guess they could be done.

Come in, you said to come on in,
There's work that should be done,
But sir, it's slick, and man it's cold,
Outside, it's not much fun.

Okay, I'll come, but I'll be late,
I'll be a little late,
I've got to clean my car off, Sir,
A job I really hate.

Good Bye, I'll see ya in a while,
I'll slide there all the way,
Yes Sir, I'll get there when I can,
Yes, later in the day.

Hey, Kids, I've got to go to work,
I can't come out and play,
Oh, what the heck, I'll be right out,
I'll work another day.

SNOWSTORM

It is blizzarding out there,
snow is blowing everywhere,
it is quite a winter mix,
we'll stay in without a care.

Let the others fight the wind,
with their coats and mittens on.
Light the fire, stoke it well,
we'll make cocoa when we're done.

What a cozy sight this is,
snuggled up, we're such a pair.
I'm so glad he's now retired.
Hee, hee, ha, I thought I'd share.

SNOW'S BEAUTY

The beauty of the snow
transcends all;
the inconvenience it causes
and yes, helps us to slow
this life's call
to take breaks, deep breaths and pauses

not rushing through our days
pondering
its worth, its headaches, its rat race,
its never ending maze,
wandering
hither and yon from place to place

we can relax, reflect,
take a nap,
write a poem or bake a cake;
the snow is worth respect;
both hands clap;
soon summer's heat will overtake.

END OF FEBRUARY

One lone snowflake,
falls to the ground,
others follow,
making no sound.

Wet white blanket
quickly covers,
budding flowers,
while cold hovers.

Warm midday sun,
shown down below,
warmed the earth and
melted the snow.

Easter lilies,
perked up their heads,
thanked the snow that
covered their beds.

Mike Perkins, Member-at-Large,
2 poems

How Far

the sky tonight is marbled
clouds backlit by a full moon
a kool southerly breeze
the fyce dog
stands watch

and it is too early yet
for the troubling bugs
so I drink coffee too late
writing on the back porch
while the truce holds

but the night wans
and I remember
past moments
and how far away
I am from them

A Little Lower Than the Angels

I think the thing I like the most
is the smile that comes
as you look deep into me
how it grows from the eyes
and then the mouth
and I see something
which I think looks like love
in that infant face
as I look back hard
to impress you into my mind
and imprint me to your memory
so that even if you do not remem-
ber
outright I am still there
your guardian
standing watch, and
bearing witness
a little lower than the angels

Jack Frost

January will arrive with Jack Frost by her side.
As expected we will feel their presence far and wide.
Coming with their entourage will be the ice and snow.
Keeping warm gets harder when their cold winds start to blow.

Frozen ponds and icicles add to the winter scene.
Racing through, this couple can be volatile and mean.
Often January and her Jack will change their ways.
Suddenly they may, in mercy, grant some pleasant days.
Then comes February's turn; they know they cannot stay.

Post-Christmas

It's time to get the tinsel down
and put the Christmas wreaths away.
Bright decorations I so love
must not stay up another day.

So many feasts, behind us now,
were smorgasbords of great delight.
The cards, the shiny bags and bows
will soon be packed and out of sight.

I'm always in a somber mood
when I take down the Christmas tree,
when carols start to fade away,
when no more lovely lights I see.

My mood turns hopeful every time
old calendar defers to new.
Post-Christmas doldrums start to fade.
It's time to bid the old adieu.

The challenges and holidays,
the tears and laughter of the year
will take their place as memories;
new opportunities are here.



Autumn Parade (haibun)

My town holds its annual parade in mid-September. Early in the morning, town workers block side roads, placing orange cones along the way, and residents happily remove their cars from the street. The parade passes by my house, so I can see the procession without stepping outside. That is one benefit of living on the main street. At 9:00 a.m., band music blares through the crisp morning air. Perched on the second floor, I look out the window. Spectators sit or stand on the curb, enjoying various types of vehicles, floats, and balloons. Kids busy themselves picking up candies thrown from the motor vehicles. Little dogs on leashes wag their tails, watching the cars and trucks one moment, and the applauding crowd the next.

pageantry
a squirrel peeks
from the treetop

The Squirrel and I (haibun)

Late in the afternoon, I am taking my teenage daughter home. As usual, she is impatient, complaining about my overly cautious, overly slow driving habits. She has something to do at home—which I am sure is not exactly academic. The car picks up speed, runs five miles over the speed limit, and then jolts. I keep driving, when my daughter shrieks, “Dad, you ran over a squirrel!”

Annoyed by her scream, I sigh, asking, “What are you talking about?”

“You killed a squirrel! Its tail is still moving.”

I look in the rearview mirror. There it is—a furry body quivering on the pavement. Amid shock, I step on the accelerator to flee the scene. “There is no turning back,” I tell myself.

“I can’t believe you killed a squirrel,” my daughter accuses me as if I had committed a murder. Was I not speeding under her pressure? Her taunting gets on my nerves. I feel like uttering something in response yet remain silent—I am too upset to say anything. The next day, I drive back to the place where the squirrel died. The poor critter lies flat dead. Even its tail does not move now.

rush hour
a squirrel enters my lane
in two jumps

REPORTS

Terrie Jacks, On the Edge, DeSoto, Mo. -- The On the Edge poetry group has been meeting off and on over the last few months. I've been one of the off ones. Other things have kept me from the meetings. Anyway,... Many of the attendees to the meetings have been busy writing verses and stories. Some have attempted to be published. Others have artwork that they have pursued. Our meetings are at the Windsor Library in Barnhart. It's a nice place to meet and chat. No faux pas can be reported. We've had a number of guffaws at the meetings. Done a bit of tweaking on various verses and shared where to send work. Faye Adams is always up to date on that. Billy Adams often is helpful to talk to about computer stuff. Don and Carol Horstman had a busy season with their art. Anna Wells has a project for her church to finish. John Han has submitted work to cattails, and on-line journal for haiku and I also have a few in the same journal to appear in January. We are all busy.

For the holiday we got together for brunch at the Bob Evans in Fenton. We stuffed ourselves with breakfast then had dessert. On the Edge wishes to wish everyone a Happy New Year. May the writing muse be with you and the "force" strong enough to get them published.

KUDOS

Lee Ann Russell, Poets & Friends, Springfield, MO
-- Honorable Mention from the Poetry Society of Texas, for "Lonely Day" and "Better Late Than Never."

First Merit Award from League of Minnesota Poets for "Co-dependents." First Place, Children's, "Fair to Remember," 2nd place, short story, "Dinner for Four," Honorable Mention, Western Short Story, "Homecoming," and Honorable Mention Humorous Story, "Cutting Remarks," from Ozark Creative Writers' Conference. Honorable Mention for poems "Bejeweled," "Bequest," "Better Late Than Never," "Concupiscence" and "Critic's Reward" from Indiana State Federation of State Poetry Clubs. 3rd place for "Cook's Dilemma," and Honorable Mention for "Critics' Reward," "Spring in a Trashy Trailer Park," and "Friends of the Library" from Poets' Roundtable of Arkansas Annual Poetry Day.

Lee Ann Russell read her poem "Bonniebrook" at Kewpie doll creator Rose O'Neill's Bonniebrook home north of Branson, MO at the Festival of the Painted Leaves and presented James A. Autry's poem, "Geneology" with Larry Cunningham. Congratulations, Lee Ann!

Mike Perkins, Member at Large, would like to offer members who are interested a free digital review copy of his poetry book *Gravel Roads* through Amazon.com at http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00CQ75PB4?Version*=1&*entries*=0. Mike Perkins is also working on another volume with the title **Shadows on the Cave Wall**, with the title referring to Plato's famous allegory of the cave.

Marilyn K. Smith, Articles "The Cook-off," and "Stick Men" and poems "Drat!" and "The Day We Learned to Cuss" in the Fall issue of the Journal of the Ozarks magazine, and "A Tale orTwo" weekly column in the Buffalo Reflex Newspaper.

Faye Adams, a new poem, "A Slight Improvement" won first place, "Murphy Made History" won a 2nd place, and two poems won Honorable Mention in Galaxy of Verse Fall/Winter 2015 contest. The first and second place poems will be published in Volume 35, No. 2 issue of Galaxy of Verse. Faye Adams sponsored a Centro poetry contest in two annual Galaxy of Verse contests, and everyone is invited to enter her contest. Go to: galaxyofverse@gmail.com for more information.

Missouri State Poetry Society Winter Contest 2016

Break out your keyboards, pens, pencils, Etch-A-Sketches, or whatever you use to give your poems a physical presence on this earth. Then make a trip to that archaic institution that sells those sticky bits of paper called postage stamps. Then put them to use to send a batch of poems in my direction so they can have a chance at immortality. Yes, you, the poet, could become a winner in our Winter Contest. But like some other things you hear about, you can't win if you don't play. Don't delay, like I tend to do. Get a collection together and send them my way.

All instructions are on the MSPS website: mostatepoetry.com.

-- Bill Lower --

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