

Obituary Lottery & Quiet Mind

By

Vern Fein

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... Here are two disquietingly soothing poems from Vern Fein. In 'QUIET MIND' he has personified his Conscious as Donne did with Death. Not a bad idea, to better know the enemy, "Quit speaking to me!" "I have meditated to rid myself of your chatter," "Even when I sleep you are loud and raucous." My favourite lines "I'm not going to speculate about what you will do / if there is an afterlife. The idea of sharing, speculating, / pontificating, philosophizing for all eternity is..." ...wouldn't want to spoil it for you. The 'OBITUARY LOTTERY' reads more like a checklist for Vern. Daily competing with his print-adversary. His greatest nemesis--Holmes' Moriarty. Is he older or younger than the eulogized? ...aspiring to become a Non-age Narian. (Spacing and font size are poet's own.) HS*

OBITUARY LOTTERY

**I confess I skim over that lottery
every day when I read the paper,
hoping not to recognize
anyone I know but
once in a while someone
I remember peers up at me.
I am shocked but should not be
as I am 80 now so I know
the final stretch I am on
is not very long**

and that few get to 90
and even fewer to the century.

Sometimes I look at the final number.
If very young, I feel awful and lucky.
In their 70's, I feel weird, whistle.
But I mostly look at the 80's.
If the age is early like 82 I frown,
if 88, when Mom died, I feel
a slight release, an intake
of good breath and if I see
anyone in the 90's I rejoice
and hope and pray I am one of them
who still drives a car at 99,
even dances at weddings and has breath
to blow out most of the candles.

How great to be in that rare company
so when we nonagenarians
have a Memorial hardly
anyone will be left to attend.
But that is a selfish wish,
my fellow octogenarians.
I suspect you have had it too.

QUIET MIND

Mind: Quit speaking to me!

**You are rattling on the way you always prattle
and have done so since I was a child
and in old age still talk incessantly.**

**You have thought good things and given me good ideas.
You've even helped me write some poems and songs,
suggested I say kind things, but also mean words.**

**I have meditated to rid myself of your chatter, but you are good
at intruding whenever you want, breaking in like a noisy child.
The world keeps happening, leaping or slugging forward,
throwing new sticks on the fire of my brain
that sparks you into a blaze or just embers.**

**Even when I sleep you are loud and raucous.
Dreams have dialogue and you have no trouble
speaking up and sometimes dream words are worse.
In them, you have no filters, say what the hell you want
which you can't say when we are awake.
Stuff our dreams with people we forgot
or don't like or love from all times and ages,
even people and things that never existed,
then wake us up and laugh at us as we slowly rise to reality,
unless you just disappear and leave us with wadded bedcovers.**

I have not been able to stop you all of my days.

I'm not going to speculate about what you will do if there is an afterlife. The idea of sharing, speculating, pontificating, philosophizing for all eternity is more like a hellish punishment than a heavenly reward.

Maybe then, instead, you will have an angelic way of finally, truly being quiet, granting peace.

THE POET SPEAKS: *Thanks for asking. I write on a great variety of poetic subjects and these two poems are examples. One concerns old age and dying, and, at 81, that is much on my mind. Quiet Mind is a sometimes theme of mine as I see how the mind and the emotions interplay in how we live our lives. I didn't write a poem until about 6 years ago, when one popped into my head for no reason I know. I showed it to a friend and he encouraged me and I am now happily part of the local poetry scene and enjoying this avocation immensely. My joke is that I am the poet laureate of my street, but aiming for the next block over. Finally, I am a narrative poet and struggle some with being too prosey. I lean toward the Ted Kooser school. One of my biggest role models is George Bilgere.*

AUTHOR BIO: A retired special education teacher, Vern Fein has published over two hundred poems on over ninety different sites, a few being: *82 Review, Bindweed Magazine, Gyroscope Review, Courtship of Winds, Young Raven's Review, Fleas On The Dog, Monterey Poetry Review, and Corvus Review. His first poetry book—I WAS YOUNG AND THOUGHT IT WOULD CHANGE—was published by Cyberwit Press.

