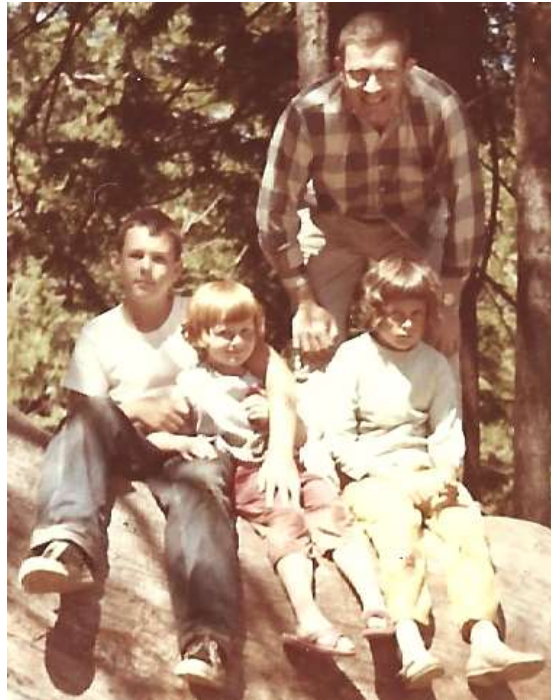


Family Secrets:
Poems reflecting a difficult childhood
by Teri Ekland



When I grew up in the 60's and 70's, people were ignorant about the psychological impact parenting had on their children. These days, 2023, it's fairly common to find data on the internet that discusses how the caregiver's impact on a child's psyche lasts a lifetime. And sometimes, if at all, it takes a lifetime to unravel the habits formed as a child living in a hostile environment. A child is a thinking being. Not a worm or a slug. Therefore, the child formulates strategies and reasons out ways to avoid or minimize the trauma—the harshness of her environment.

In family pictures from my childhood, I am often pouting. Why? Was I generally troubled and tormented? And if so by whom? I do know. But the delusions formed during childhood aren't easy to unpack and once they are, a person can achieve mental clarity and live a

relatively peaceful and happy life. True self-awareness brings contentment and peace of mind, in other words.

Family pictures aren't the only indications of my troubled childhood. The poetry I wrote from the time I was twenty until my mid-forties also hints at what I was keeping deep within the recesses of my psyche, in places hidden from my conscious every day thoughts. Why? Because poetry is the subconscious mind, the enlightened mind, speaking to the conscious mind, to the self, and to the world.

During the most sensitive period of development, a child learns how to suppress and avoid the trauma surrounding her. She develops survival strategies that become locked into her mind. Often she resorts to hiding from or fleeing the harsh situation; or hiding within herself, lashing back, becoming extremely independent and refusing to relying on anyone else; or becoming incapable of working with or trusting anyone. Or maybe, at the same time, she develops the habit of trying to please everyone or she flinches and jumps when approached and startled from deep thought. These are some of the coping mechanisms and quirks that I developed as a small child and that stayed with me well into adult life. Until I began to recognize that I was not the culprit of my childhood torments. I was the victim.

What were the factors of my childhood that caused me to resort to such survival strategies? There were two major causes: my parents and my older brother. My parents were very hands off and that made them neglectful. They were not involved in my educational experience and said very little to me about my goals and motivations. In fact, I remember asking a few questions about what I was learning in school and Mom tended to say, "You'll learn it one day. Don't worry about it." But their neglect, indifference really, wasn't the foremost problem I suffered during early childhood. My parents traumatized me with punishments that I didn't

understand. But this takes a bit of explaining. I grew up with a brother two years older than me and he constantly bullied and berated me as a “stupid girl.” I had to live with this until I was about eight or ten and I hid from him and avoided him altogether. At the same time, I was born with a very active and imaginative mind. Some call it manic. I don’t because psychological terms tend to be degrading in themselves. I prefer being called artistic or creative. Anyway, often as a small child I grew upset. Perhaps I was crying for attention from my neglectful parents. Or I was crying for help because of my tormenting brother. Unfortunately, my parents saw my behavior as bad. To them I was throwing tantrums and they punished me by hurling me off to the bathroom and throwing water on me—as if to tame a wild beast. These punishment sessions did nothing but traumatize me; I would fight back and continue to cry and rage, as if for survival of my little child spirit, while ripping my clothes. Eventually they stopped and left me to wear myself out in the bathroom, soaked and exhausted.

Here’s the thing. I had suppressed these traumatizing punishment sessions deep in my mind and really didn’t recall them, or think about them until I was well into my forties and going through debilitating mental issues. It’s not that I had erased these sessions from my mind, it’s just that I didn’t understand how they had impacted my later life. My head retained childhood delusions about myself and my world, my family, and I had to face and unpack those delusions.

What were my childhood delusions? These days I can clearly say what they entailed. Foremost, I believed I was “in the wrong;” I was “the bad one,” the “stupid one,” the one causing all the trauma around me. If parents are making a child feel that way, why are they even parents? The second problematic delusion I formed as a child was that I believed my parents were perfect, good, and wonderful. The best parents in the world. They were good people in the sense that they were religious and had morals. They didn’t drink or do untoward things. But in truth, they were

terrible parents and I don't think I learned what it felt like to be loved and respected. But I had a fighting spirit. That's why I got upset. Thirdly, with all the ugly berating and bullying from my brother, I believed I *was* stupid. And I kept this belief until I joined the Army and during a few maneuvers I became interested in the technical details of the operation and the sergeants told me I was very intelligent. It was the first I had ever heard this. And into my adult life, as I earned degrees and pursued intellectual interests, I kept learning and realizing that my mind had so much more to offer myself and others than that of a stupid little girl.

In conclusion, I had to uncover many terrible myths about myself and my childhood before I could overcome debilitating issues as an adult and achieve a calm, peaceful, and clear mind empty of all the childhood delusions as well as all the delusions the world's cultures and religions impose on the individual self.

The following poems I wrote before becoming fully self-aware at least on a conscious level. Ironically, these poems indicate that I was already fully aware of my real, non-delusional self. Funny how that works. In my thinking, and in the philosophy of Buddhism (not that I'm advocating any religion because I am not) we are born with a mind that is already enlightened. And this mind is with us through life. It's just that a harsh childhood environment, and then a delusional world at large, a world that imposes opinions, beliefs, and labels, and religious and social constraints on the individual, clutter the enlightened mind with delusional notions about the self. To gain clarity, to overcome debilitating delusions, I had to empty my mind of all the clutter and understand my true self. My true unblemished mind. I believe my poetry helps illustrate this notion about the self. Please enjoy.



Part I: Reflective Poems

Phantoms of the Marshland

Phantoms of the Marshland
Evading to be seen
Leaving trails—glimpses
Demarcating where they've been.

By way of fading marsh's gleam,
In splash! A phantom shown.
What mystery behooves my soul
Taut hours away from home?

Phantoms of the Marshlands –
I know not why you be –
Before I ever grasp you,
You're snatched away from me.

(Meaning and comments 3-1-2022): I include these two “phantom” poems that I wrote in Thailand and that I’ve commented on in my poetry collection “Echoes on a Rippling Pond” because in the context of this collection about my family secrets, the poems take on a deeper meaning. I believe that’s the nature of a poem with vast imagery and allegory. It can contain many meanings, perhaps like a painting, a dance, or a book. Perhaps each reader or viewer of the artwork, the poem, has his own interpretation. And that’s great! It means the artist has been successful in engaging with her audience.

Now for the meaning of this poem according to my interpretation based on my personal experiences. My childhood was difficult for many reasons as I've explained. At this stage of my life, I refuse to use the labels society would thrust upon me or believe anyone's degrading opinion about me. That's like accepting the slurs my brute of a brother used on me when I was a little girl. But I did have quite a powerful little mind as a child and often I became upset, confused. My parents didn't know how to relate to me and at times I must have frustrated them, especially my mother who was the primary parent. She worked outside the home and did all the cooking and cleaning so I'm sure this prevented her from devoting herself to her kids. But the neglect from my parents was more than that. I believe Mom came from a pioneer conviction that believes either a child is "right" does "right" behaves "right" or they're a bad seed. It seems this applied to my education. My parents were not involved in my learning process and so I had no incentive to do well and get good grades. I believe Mom thought that it was up to me, as a little kid, to do well. Not her. It sounds contrite but it's true. About the only time I heard anything from Mom was when my sister told me about things Mom had said about me: "I don't know why she doesn't do as well as you," for example. It was a "two-faced" way to be as a parent. I don't remember ever having a good "talking to" with my mom. If she didn't like what I did, she spanked me with a switch or had my father do so. I did not develop any kind of understanding about what I was supposed to do in school. And that was part of the confusion. But the real confusion is that, as a child, I believed my parents were perfect, good people. And they were, in many ways, but they just were ineffective for me. They did not provide me with a good foundation for life. I truly was on my own and that's why I became so independent and self-reliant. But I threw fits and eventually, when I was perhaps eight, my parents took me to a psychologist at the University of Portland. After a few sessions, Dr. Stevens told my parents that

I was brilliant, an important comment that my mother never shared with me until I was well into adulthood. Why? I don't know. The truth is, I grew up believing I was rather stupid. Why not? I was shy and my brother constantly berated me. What's worse is that this Dr. Stevens recommended to my parents that whenever I "acted up" they take me to the bathroom and throw water on me as punishment. Such good psychological advice back in the 1960's. It really helps the child's mind develop in a positive healthful way. NOT. The world is filled with stupidity and the individual must learn to separate herself from it all, and find her true self in the stew of an ignorant world.

Anyway, my mother began using this form of punishment but she never "tamed" me. I merely tuckered out until I "acted up" again and was again punished with water treatments. At the same time, my brother tormented me. I wonder how far he went with the abuse. That memory is so deep in my mental recesses that it remains hidden. But I suspect he was doing something to me because by the time I was perhaps nine, I started hiding from him, certainly ignoring him, and never speaking to him until later in my adult life. Why is that, I now wonder? Additionally, he's been absent from my life since I left home forty years ago. Why? He wants nothing to do with me. I was hardly the brute. Later in life, a VA psychiatrist told me that it wasn't my parent's fault, after I described their punishment sessions. And he's right. They were not malicious evil people purposely trying to abuse me for their pleasure. They were ignorant people who were doing what a professional told them to do and they believed they were doing the right thing. This world can be very ignorant.

I ask you, my readers, to imagine how confusing this was to a small child. I withdrew from my parents in many ways, as a form of survival, and for years and years, until I became quite delusional in my later adult life, the memories of this traumatization stayed buried in my

mind. Why? Because I tried to forge ahead in a positive way after I left home. I joined the military, went to college, married an upstanding man with a solid career. I believed I was a “go getter,” a capable person, a “renaissance woman” until delusions overtook me and my efforts collapsed and I went to the VA for help.

Over the last decade of my life, these haunting memories of childhood became apparent to me. I hadn't forgotten the water treatment, I just didn't think it relevant until I started clearing away my mind of delusion and tried to understand why I had become so shattered, psychologically. And the abuse from my brother was possibly so traumatizing that my survival mind developed during early childhood cannot release these memories. I don't know. It's just my theory.

I hope this background can give new light to this poem “Phantoms of the Marshland” and here's my take with “Family Secrets” in mind. Sometimes people, in their ignorance, say things like, “Well, if you were abused why has it taken you so long to come out with it?” “Why weren't you forthwith when it happened, or shortly after it happened?” Because, when we are developing as a child, if we aren't properly nurtured and are instead abused and traumatized, we learn to survive by hiding from the torment and that means repressing the reality of it. Perhaps, the child's imagination takes over. Then we leave childhood and try to move on, be right, and be productive but those haunting and suppressed events of childhood are still with us. They have confused us and if we don't face them, we can never find mental clarity. Suppressed, repressed memories don't just conveniently reveal themselves. Instead, we are tormented by them in ways beyond our control; we lose control until we understand our own mental makeup which includes those memories. These haunting memories from childhood traumatization are the “Phantoms of

the Marshland.” They are “evading to be seen” because our survival instincts don’t want us to relive them. But they are there—in the recesses of our minds “demarcating where they’ve been.”

“By way of fading marsh’s gleam, In splash! A phantom shown,” possibly means I have an inkling of what haunts me. “What mystery behooves my soul –Taut hours away from home?” I’m grappling with these deep haunts and don’t even know it. When I wrote this poem, I hadn’t reached the point of complete mental clarity. I hadn’t faced my childhood haunts on a conscious level, “Phantoms of the Marshlands –I know not why you be –Before I ever grasp you –You’re snatched away from me.” But my subconscious mind, the poem, knew all my deepest secrets and was revealing to me, to my conscious mind, what lay hidden in my memory, in my childhood experiences.

A note about writing this poem: I did not sit before that marshland in Thailand and say to myself, “Gee, let me write a poem about my suppressed memories, my haunts from childhood.” In fact, probably when I wrote this poem I had no thought about “repressed memories” because they were still repressed. I just looked at the marsh at sunset and the words tumbled from my mind. Maybe my subconscious mind was speaking to me. But now, in my later years, the poem clearly speaks to me about the reality of my life and my psychology. I only hope that what I’m saying will be of help to others on their journey toward self-understanding. Certainly, I am not discussing this in order to vent and complain about a very dysfunctional family.



Phantom Good-Night

Phantom good-night
Go away!
Already
You've called
Twice
In one day.

Phantom good-bye,
I care not for
Intrusions,
I've no time for
Illusions.

Good-night,
I say,
Phantom,
Will you please
Go away?

(I imagine this poem has to do with recurring mental hang-ups, dysfunctions from
childhood that we never quite let go.)

Midnight Draws in Hours Taut

Midnight draws in hours taut –
Endeavored pangs of yore,
And you, who keeps
To twilight's thought
Accosted more and more.

Awakened recollections,
Perhaps you never knew –
These hours spent in torment
Were wasted thoughts of you.

(Another poem about haunting memories that I wrote while in China. “Wasted thoughts
of you” means I am reliving torment because I’m dwelling on these haunting memories.)



The House Not Broken

How nimbly does the cold wind fly –
Through Houses Broken.
As though it were fleeing, fleeting . . .
Incapable of illusion.

When cold winds do breathe silence
The House Not Broken yields
Many an illusion.

Silence is golden?
Think you that?
Silence is the voice unspoken
And this breaks the spirit
Called inspiration–breath.

(if thou be silent,
go down to the pit.)
a burden done,
'lest one flees,
I, from
the silent House Not Broken.

(Meaning): In broken homes it's apparent what is wrong with the family situation. And it's the same for a family with an alcoholic, drug user, thief, and other apparent wrongdoer. But in the "House Not Broken" dysfunctions aren't so clear, especially to the child. My parents had terrible parenting skills—neglect and traumatizing punishments—and all through childhood I thought I was the problem and my childhood mind formed many illusions that I was incapable of sorting out. Many years had to pass before I developed enough mental clarity to dismantle all the

illusions from my childhood—delusions about myself and about the human world at large. I doubt I am unique in this matter.



In my pocket there are carried (A poem I wrote while in my garden on Night Hawk Way.)

In my pocket
There are carried
Small and scattered
Worn and tattered
Bones, tiny bones
Of sources forgotten
Of vanquished concern.

At times
One can feel small and forgotten
Amid the variety of life
Concerned.
For what, I wonder.
Who holds the frailty of my tender soul?
But me?
How far can I stretch? For how long?
Perhaps I do know,
For in my pocket there are carried
Bones to feel, shapes and textures to hold
But not to see or show.
Revealing would be a revelation,
A revolution –
A renovation of the soul . . .

And on occasion,
I feel warm and vanquished,
As though time plays tricks
On she who dares

To flutter and to scatter
Seeds
in a rock-filled garden.

The effort is to grow –
To simply stretch and glow
The warmth of nature's
Un-captured soul.

The storm will come,
And the weeds will grow
Hardily amid the rock.
While in my pocket
I will carry
That which cannot subside,
For otherwise,
who would mourn
The fallen hummingbird
In my garden
Of concern,
If not for me?
And who will forever carry
Inside pockets
Frail and fragile
Tiny bones?

(Meaning and comments 2-27-2022): This is a literary poem of imagery; I was actually in my back garden when this entire poem came to mind. My backyard at Night Hawk Way was small with a variety of desert plants and trees. Once I tried to grow lemon and lime trees at the narrow side of the house. They were probably too close together. I was no farmer or gardener like my grandmother Bertie who had the most spectacular garden I've ever known—a garden wonderland of my childhood. My grandparents lived on a small lot in North Portland but their garden took up practically the entire yard: the side yard had a garden of roses and rows of raspberries; the backyard had grapes, a fig tree, tomatoes, carrots, corn, and on and on. My grandmother could grow a coconut that she brought back from Hawaii. She came from a farm in Forest Grove, Oregon. But I really didn't inherit her gardening skills. The lime tree grew a few

years until it was loaded with limes. I was thrilled. My spouse and I went on a trip and when I came back, prepared to make lots of Indian spiced limes and have frozen lime juice, the tree was dead and all the limes turned black. No, I am not a gardener. But I tried and I still do here in the Mohave Desert. My aloe and mints seem to grow all right. The rosemary and lavender usually die, eventually.

Now about this poem. It's one I include in this collection of "Family Secrets" because that's what it's really about. I'll try not to fall into too much negativity about my childhood family, but the truth is the truth and sometimes, in order to understand the self, the makeup of the adult psyche, we must face how our caregivers raised us and what we actually experienced. There were good moments when I was a little girl, but bad experiences crowded them out in the end and as an adult I succumbed to mental delusion, for a period of time. Before I describe the reality of my little girl experiences, I must explain a truth about surviving life.

We suppress bad experiences as children in order to survive. Especially when those experiences are confusing and chaotic. Children blank out some of the most horrible episodes of childhood. We repress these experiences because we don't want to live with them. Because we can't. I grew up, left home, and tried to make something of myself in a positive way but deep in my psyche I still possessed a lot of chaos and turmoil because I had been traumatized as a little girl, severely and often. This slowly corroded my adult perceptions, despite my efforts to forge ahead and be somebody, and be right. I didn't realize this, and I became delusional and tumbled into disability. I became unable to manage my life, to hold down a job. Fortunately, the VA granted me disability compensation when I was in my late forties. Why? Because out of high school I had joined the Army. To make a long story short, the VA determined that my military experience exacerbated a pre-existing condition, my PTSD from childhood trauma.

I kept trying, in adulthood. After the Army I went to college and earned two degrees. I then went to Asia and taught English at three different universities. I explored the world. All the while I was having delusions which I used to call “manic bubbles” but at this stage of my life, I reject mental health labels because they are degrading and cause further delusions about understanding the true self.

Let me sum up my premise on mental health and the meaning of this poem. Childhood traumatization creates strategies of survival and one of those strategies is to suppress the trauma deep into our subconscious mind to forget what is too horrible to remember and thus, re-live. This creates frailty in the person’s inner core during adulthood. The person may not even realize that something deep inside the psyche is causing her reactions and actions. She goes on with adult life and experiences new traumas that cause the childhood traumas to resurface in the adult’s survival instincts.

To be clearer, I found myself in a difficult relationship with a man with issues of anxiety and anger. Through his fits of anxiety, I relived my childhood trauma without understanding the connection because, for one thing, I was living under delusions about myself and the world. I accepted the mental health diagnosis instead of facing my own mind and cleaning house which means understanding what the delusions are, what the connections to childhood are, and getting over them so I can possess clarity of mind. With the help of my own intelligence and the guiding forces of Buddhist and Hindu philosophies and brain experts who aren’t under the sway of psychological fallbacks (thank you YouTube and Amazon Prime), I have achieved that clarity. I am quite alone in all this effort. But happy with my self-understanding. All the hidden dimensions of my mind have been exposed and I am free to enjoy my literary works. My advice: don’t let anyone tell you that you are this or that, especially when it comes to degrading

psychological terms. You are nothing but your inner core of wisdom, your natural Buddhahood, the enlightened mind you were born with.

My concern is for my own mental health. I'm not being selfish; that's just another label put on me. No one else is going to give me clarity of mind and peace of heart. And I think most of my poetry reflects this sentiment especially in the line "Who holds the frailty of my tender soul? But me."

With this background, I now can better explain the meaning of the poem. It was written while I lived with my first husband, a stable man with a good job, but a man who really had no clue about me. He never read my poetry and never played his clarinet or the piano for me. We were just living a solid life of urban values. It was after I had lived in Asia for three years. I had many cats and thought I was quite satisfied with life. I didn't really know my deepest self on the conscious level. I never spoke with my first spouse about my childhood traumas because they hadn't surfaced yet and he wasn't traumatizing me. Everything was good. We had social friends and a nice home.

That aside, this poem written during this tranquil time in my life touches on the fact that deep inside, in my pockets of mind-matter, I had secrets from childhood that existed even if I didn't talk about them and hadn't faced them. What were they? My brother traumatized me, constantly picked on me; degraded me, and perhaps took advantage of me in unpleasant ways. At the same time, I had a childhood mind that was tormented. I threw "tantrums" and my parents did not take this behavior very well. Mom's "water" punishment sessions severely traumatized me and confused me. How can a child understand this kind of treatment? She can't. To survive she suppresses it. I think my mother tried to love me, because it's what she was supposed to do as a good woman and Christian.

The makeup of my childhood family was “neglect, indifference, and traumatizing abuse.” Those are the “bones” that I carried deep in my pockets while I resided on Night Hawk Way. They were there, always had been there, and always will be. Like karma, we carry with us all our experiences in the deepest parts of our psyche, especially those of childhood, the sensitive and formative years that created the psyches we possess as adults, whether or not we repress these memories.

“Of vanquished concern” means we have overpowered and suppressed these memories. But have we really done so?

“How far can I stretch? For how long? Perhaps I do know;” this line means that I am capable of knowing myself, of self-realization, by unlocking the hidden memories that have shaped me—secret, difficult, traumatizing times that we “good good godly people” like my parents, don’t reveal and don’t talk about. And this behavior causes confusion and thus delusion. If we don’t face our past, the truth about it no matter how severe it was, we will never achieve clarity of mind, which should be the only goal of life. Self-awareness and compassion for others who are suffering confusion and delusion imposed upon the individual by the human environment at large—from childhood experiences to religious and social institutions and so on. And once we understand all this, once we know our true selves apart from how the world labels us, then we are revealed, at least to ourselves which is all that really matters, and that is a “revelation, a revolution—a renovation of the soul.”

This is one of my favorite poems. It’s so revealing and I wrote it well before I fell into massive delusions about myself and well before I achieved clarity of mind. One more note. I must emphasize that my understanding of the self, an “alone path,” doesn’t mean I am a selfish person who cares about nobody but myself. That’s simply another world-imposed view that is

not based on any kind of truth. In the poem I wrote the line “who would mourn the fallen hummingbird in my garden of concern, if not for me?” The garden represents what I make out of life, how I live, what I grow, produce, do. The hummingbird is literal. I saw one in my garden, dead. Literarily, he is the Aztec and Maya warrior spirit on his way to heaven. That is the spirit of us all. Living life takes the soul of a warrior because life is a battle of self-discovery in a sea of delusion, hatred, anger, and greed—poisons of the world.

Anyway, without getting carried away with metaphor, this line is about the necessity of understanding yourself before you can truly help others understand themselves. This is the Bodhisattva philosophy of compassion. And that is not selfishness. I have always loved animals and children; have always cared deeply about those less fortunate than me. I have compassion for the “fallen” beings who have lost their way and are suffering. Why else would I be putting so much effort into finishing up my literary works? Because I want others to read my prose with the hopes that what I’m saying will make sense to them and they can apply my re-gained and innate wisdom to their own lives. Each person needs to rediscover their own innate wisdom.

Please understand what my poetry means. Become self-aware despite a contrary world and retain compassion for those who are lingering with despair and lack of awareness of the reality of the world and the nature of being human. My wish to you is a revelation, revolution, and renovation of your soul, mind, and heart. Find the peace and clarity of mind that already exist. You alone can reveal this to yourself after you feel and understand the bones you carry deep inside your mental pockets.



Beyond the Ever-widening Stream

Beyond the ever-widening stream—lies
a place to pitch quarters —
partially spoken,
partially held
remnants of yesteryears.
A place where now is
silently buried beneath
the cool swift stream
of widening hopes
and narrowing dreams.

A place of yellow daffodils,
Sweet nasturtiums,
and humming bees
meant to be caught in
pickle jars.

Who sealed the jar
Filled with baby frogs
And pitched it far into the lake?
Who summoned the cat from
the mountainside
Only to frighten her away?
Where is that boy —
my brother?
What hopes does he
now share with his sons?
Does he recall yesterday
with them —
the boys I know only from photographs?

Where is that place, beyond
the ever-widening stream?
When will we meet again
to pitch forgotten quarters?

(Meaning and Comments 3-12-2022): This poem seems to be ruminating over the trauma and abuse (sexual??) I endured as a little girl; a story that resonates in my novels “And You Learn How to Kill” and “And You Learn How to Live.” I rediscovered this poem in my Guatemala Journal while working on my novel “Guardian of the Maya Tree.” It belongs in this collection of poems but is one of my Night Hawk Way era of poetry.

“Beyond the ever-widening stream” means that as we mature our experiences expand, widen, and so does our karma, good or bad. Our mind becomes more cluttered with world information that perhaps detracts from the true essence and nature of our existence. “Lies” is emphasized because all that worldly clutter, belief systems, social constraints, psychological labels aren’t our true reality. They aren’t what we really are as a living being. Only the self, the individual, the “I” can determine the true self. The rest are a pack of lies, “a place to pitch quarters.” This line has double meaning. Quarters can be our houses, where we make our homes, or it can be coins that we toss into the stream making wishes; as a child does in make-believe. Not only that, as we get older our dreams and wishes widen, become loftier, more grandiose. We want bigger and better things. Money. Career. Love. It seems there’s no end to the dreaming until we reach the end of life and realize we can’t dream any further. (Although, I am still dreaming about finishing and publishing my books.)

“Partially spoken, partially held, remnants of yesteryears.” Does this mean that the childhood dreams are fading away? They are now are only remnants.

What does this mean? “A place where now is silently buried beneath the cool swift stream.” Childhood hopes and dreams are still there, but buried as life swiftly passes by, moves on from childhood and those dreams have lessened, narrowed, but hopes have widened. We still hope for something. Maybe more mature hopes. Do we gain hopefulness as we mature? Doesn’t seem so to me. Seems a child has more hopes than anyone unless those hopes are dashed. Does a child lose hope, feel there’s no hope? Seems more like what an adult does when bashed by life’s unfavorable twists and turns. Perhaps it means the child deep within, buried silently in our psyche, our memories, still burgeons with hope. Perhaps that hasn’t gone away. Hope for miracles and magic. For happiness. For justice. Fairness. And hope for an afterlife in a heavenly place.

“Narrowing dreams.” Reality is—we run out of time.

The next two stanzas clearly take me back to the innocence and charm of my little girl childhood. The make-believe and wishes for magic from the simplest things of “yellow daffodils, sweet nasturtiums, and humming bees meant to be caught in pickle jars.” Then I wrote a stanza that offsets this charming little girl world. It’s about a brother who was not good to me. At times, he was a brute. Constantly berating me and blaming me for anything that went wrong in his world; i.e., he was making root beer in the basement and his jars exploded. He charged at me, accused me of deliberately breaking all his jars, and he hit me. Another vivid memory concerns my sister who is four years younger than me. We were never close and I don’t remember much about her. She had her life, I had mine and I think mine was more difficult due to the trauma I endured from my brother and parents (water punishments). Anyway, when I was perhaps ten and my sister was six we were arguing over something. Maybe I even called her a name. It was kid stuff and certainly I was never a brute to my sister. She and I were at the end of the hallway and

suddenly my brother ran down the hall yelling at me and he kicked me as hard as he could between the legs because of my interaction with my sister. I really don't remember the relationship between my sister and brother, who were six years apart. Perhaps he took on being her defender. It's difficult to imagine what really happened other than my brother badly hurt me, physically, rather out of the blue. I don't think this was an isolated incident. He hit me a lot, I was defenseless, and he spent a great deal of his time, when around me, demeaning me as a "stupid girl" and so on. Maybe this is typical kid stuff, but it was never ending and never changing.

I saw my brother as a brute, mean to me, and mean to animals. I have always loved animals. As a little girl, I probably loved them more than the people around me. Here are some examples of my brother's cruelty to animals which he perhaps did to torment me. Anything to torment me—the sibling inferior to him. At least that's probably how a bully thinks. I remember when I was about in the sixth grade, I had mice as pets and for a science experiment where I cut the whiskers off one of them to see how it would run through a maze. One mouse got loose. Mom screamed. And my brother smashed all my mice with a broom handle and gassed those that lived. Another time, when camping, he put a live frog in a can of water and set it on the campfire to watch it boil. Fortunately, my dear Grandfather Stan saw this and stopped it. In this poem I describe two incidents. At Diamond Lake, he put a bunch of little frogs in a jar and threw them out into the lake, to torment me. Perhaps, this is a play on "pitch quarters" in the poem. The incident greatly disturbed me but I could do nothing about it. And another time, I watched him summon a poor stray cat from the bushes in a park. I remember thinking that summoning the cat was a wonderful thing. A kind thing but when the cat finally approached he slapped it and scared it away. By the time I was eight or ten, I hid from him, avoided him, and never spoke to him

until a few years after I returned home from the Army and his first wife befriended me. And I just can't remember if the abuse involved anything sexual but I know I was afraid to be alone in a tent with him and I do remember when I was very little, maybe five or six, he and his friends pulled down my pants and slapped my butt. What was that about? Memories of my brother involve what was painful for me as a little girl. Is that what this poem is about?

All that being said, the poem's next stanza is directly asking about my brother. Where is he? You see, I don't know. We haven't spoken or seen each other in nearly forty years. When in my early thirties I met with my family in Portland and we went to the Spaghetti Factory. When I was leaving, I decided to give everyone a hug, including my brother. It seemed like the thing to do. When I hugged my brother he seemed frozen stiff as though I repulsed him. As if I were the childhood brute. That was the last I saw of him but I did hear from him one time after that. It was early on when I lived at Night Hawk Way. My parents and grandparents came down for the Christmas holiday. I was at the breakfast nook table with everyone when the phone rang. I answered it. There was nothing but silence for a moment, then my brother said, and only said, "Is Grandpa there?" No hi sis, how are you? No nothing.

In the stanza "Where is that boy?" I am reflecting this fact that I know nothing about him. He has three sons, I know. Why would I care about what hopes he shares with his sons except that he dashed my little girl hopes, wishes, dreams, when he was cruel. Am I asking if he taught his sons to be cruel too? Not directly, of course, but by way of his behavior, attitude, and demeanor. "Does he recall yesterday with them" seems to emphasize this notion. I don't know his sons, as my next line indicates, except from photographs. I do know that one of his sons molested a little girl cousin. This was something my mother shared with me long ago. My thought then was that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

Now this very last stanza is interesting to me. “Where is that place, beyond the ever-widening stream?” It seems to tell me that as my life’s experiences widen, and I grow older, the haunts, pain, and trauma of my early childhood diminish so much that it becomes another world, a place I don’t know anymore. In truth, I have faced my childhood haunts in recent years and have achieved clarity of mind after years of battling delusions about my true self and true nature. That is why I now understand these poems I wrote during periods of my life when I wasn’t quite as aware of myself at least on a conscious level. The poems were my deeper mind spitting out truths in fantastic images. I think direct prose about ugly incidents sounds like I’m just whining. Get over it! People might say. Childhood trauma is not an illness. It is not a disease. But it causes suffering, painful and haunting memories and dreams, and most of all it causes delusions about the true self. The only way to overcome these delusions is to face these haunts head on and recognize that somethings in life are “ugly” and maybe childhood and family were really not a healthful environment. But fortunately, we move on, far away from that place in our ever-widening stream and we can conquer these tormenting haunts that have caused our delusions in life. Delusions about our true nature in a world that might have us believe differently. I had to learn how to love and respect myself when, at times, it felt like no one else in the world did.

Now, what do I mean by the last line “When will we meet again, to pitch forgotten quarters?” I can’t mean that I hope to meet my brother again. I don’t and never have. This sounds like I’m contemplating confronting him and throwing out, pitching, what he did to me during our childhood. Why would I care to do this? I healed myself. Confronting him won’t heal me further. I seek no revenge. It’s long gone, over. And most of my life I have felt like I really have no brother because the one I had was a complete ZERO. No, I doubt we’ll ever meet again to reminisce about childhood. But the thing is, one day, if and when my books are published, he

may have a chance to read this poem and know I haven't forgotten what I went through, despite his indifference toward me all these years. I don't think anyone ever forgets the traumatization of childhood. They are karmic acts that have to be reconciled in the mind in order to obtain physical health and any form of clarity. I am left to wonder, however, if a brute and bully ever comes to terms with himself or if he simply keeps piling up or maintaining all the bad karma, the bad behavior, of his life. If so, one thing's for certain, he will never achieve true clarity of mind and know or understand the true nature of reality. When you cause harm, when you are cruel and brutal, you not only effect those you harm, you also injure yourself, your own precious heart and mind. Maybe even your very gift of life. Don't know. I'm just happy I am who I am. Peace be upon you, dear brother, in that place beyond the ever-widening stream.



Twin towers 1986. Portland Fremont Bridge and Mt. St. Helens Eruption 1980

A Small Town Can be Any Town

A small town,
Can be any town –
Even New York City
If you were there
Born and raised
But cannot stay,
For reasons left unclear to say.

People will advise—unfortunately:
“There’s no place like home.”
“You can’t run away forever.”
“I HOPE YOU FIND WHAT YOU’RE LOOKING FOR.”

Well, I heard my own voices,

Inside my head
Since early childhood.
Voices confident
Through reasons unclear
And to me they said,
“Go out to sea,
and stir up whirlwinds
with flowers.”

(Meaning and comments 3-14-2022): After a difficult childhood, I was eager to leave my family home and Portland as soon as I graduated from high school. With my best pal, I went to Europe on my first adventure away from home (a story I partially describe in my first novel “Ten Years Past Cairo”). But I had to return home after four months. I wanted to get away again as soon as possible so joined the Army on another grand adventure that didn’t turn out as I hoped it would (I wrote about this experience in my memoir “The Trouble with Brass.”) I’m sure I didn’t get on too well in the military environment because of issues I had from childhood traumatization—now called PTSD—that seeped to the surface without my awareness and caused me to react in ways that might not be conventional. After a year and a half, I went AWOL to Sitges, Spain and had another grand adventure that was mostly based on delusional thoughts that stemmed from my psyche’s unresolved issues, if you know what I mean. However, I must emphasize here that at the time the situation in the military, at least at my permanent station, was horrendous. My roommates shot up heroin and popped pills. Medics gave me pills. I myself OD’d and so in truth it was almost the right decision to get the hell away from the environment. But no one understood my rationalization. When I returned before I became a deserter, sergeants exclaimed that I had a wild hair up my ass. I wasn’t able to articulate that it really wasn’t my fault. The environment drove me to escape. Then my mom writes and says something like how can I do something so stupid. She had no clue that it was the environment, that it was her own treatment of me during childhood that made me rationalize, probably quite logically in

retrospect, that escaping the environment was my best strategy for survival. But I wasn't mature enough, didn't understand me and the world enough, to articulate this and I probably thought, "yeah, I'm just a 'bad girl.'" What an ordeal.

I believe now that what I learned as a little girl, when being traumatized, was not to submit and succumb to a harsh environment, but to escape, to get the hell away. That's why I hid from my brother all those years. That's why I fled home as soon as I graduated high school and that's why I went AWOL. But the Army experience didn't destroy me. I didn't succumb to drugs as a way of coping. I returned home with an honorable discharge, determined to make something of myself, and went to college. All on my own without any help or moral support from my parents. They were uninvolved in my life except for what mom remarked to my sister who told me mom had said "Teri probably got pregnant and had to leave the military." My parents rarely asked me about my goals and ambitions and I was on my own to make my decisions about what I pursued. And I worked on two degrees then once again fled Portland and ventured to Asia to teach English and explore the world away from home. I was an errant knight on a quest.

Now comes another point I want to make about the world in general, or my culture, or society. Misogyny. You see, when a female wants to pursue avenues other than what she's traditionally pinned into doing, (sugar and spice with a quiet lady like voice) she is loud, obnoxious, a tomboy, she talks shit, nags, complains, she isn't right in the head and so on. It's simply another reality I had to face in the world. But, as this poem says "I heard my own voices inside my head and to me they said go out to sea and stir up whirl winds with flowers." I believe this line tells it all. Stir up whirl winds, means go against the conventions, defy them, be myself, get to know your world and FY if you think this is a man's role. With flowers to me means that what I pursue and seek has to be pleasant, beautiful, fragrant, and not ugly and harmful.

Now, as for the lines of advice “people will advise, unfortunately,” they are from what a few people actually said to me. Mom of course said nothing to me and one time when I was leaving home I made her cry over the phone, by saying something like she doesn’t care about me. I did this only to get some kind of reaction from her. That being said now to the comments. “You’ll find there’s no place like home” comes from an Indian boyfriend I had shortly before I left for Asia. As if he was omni-wise and knew it all. When he said that to me, I thought how un insightful. He has no clue about what my home was like. Maybe his home, India, was wonderful for him, but my home in Portland and my childhood family had done nothing for my mental and spiritual health and growth.

So onward I left the negative environment and sought adventure. Which was the right thing for me to do. Maybe this would not be right for a different person. But it was for me! “I hope you find what you’re looking for” came from the one letter my brother ever wrote me. I was in Thailand and had written him; I guess I was trying to be like a “family” member. At the time I didn’t understand the depth of the trauma he had caused me. Anyway, he ended his letter with “I hope you find what you’re looking for” and I was put off by this statement. What an Asshole, I thought. As if he has any clue what he’s saying. As if I left Portland to find something. Well, the fact is, I did. I left to find something better than what I came from. But my brother had some gall to say this to me as if I’m just a stupid female flailing around. Would he say this to a buddy? A male. I doubt it. Anyway, I probably didn’t understand exactly why his little comment bugged me, but it did and that was that between my brother and me. The other comment “you can’t run away forever” possibly came from Mom, maybe my sister told me my mom had said this. Don’t remember. Anyway, the phrase is again misogynistic and reeks of presumption. How dare you tell me that because I have left home to seek adventure that I’m

running away from something? Even if at some depth it's true, it's none of your business to say such a condescending remark to me. FY. Maybe in my life I have been a refugee escaping a warzone. But it's my own voice, not yours, that explains to me what I do and why I am doing it. I will always stir up whirl winds with flowers and listen to my own voices inside my head. My own nature—mind, and heart. And it is a good heart because I want to bring flowers to the world in the imagery of my poetry and prose and cognition.

In sum, this is my poem to those who leave home to seek adventure, something better perhaps, maybe to escape a bad or difficult environment. The reason doesn't matter and it's up to the individual who sets out on the adventure. It's not up to others to determine the person's reasons. It's not up to society to pin a person down according to gender, race, creed, orientation and so on. We are all first and foremost human beings given the gift of life and the gift of a thinking mind—beautiful gifts to somehow have. It just happens to be my philosophy in life that each individual determines their own reasons for being and hopefully those reasons are good and as beautiful as flowers. Some advice during life might be positive and beneficial, but it's up to the individual to determine this. Unfortunately, so much of society's advice, the advice of those around us, is simple chafe that needs to be blown off by the wind, by the whirl winds at sea.



Portland, Oregon is my hometown. I grew up there during the sixties and seventies and moved away permanently in the eighties. It's not that Portland's a wretched place to live. But

some people, myself included, must depart from their hometown simply because it is their hometown.



My mother with her grandmother who had a farm in Forest Grove, Oregon where she grew an assortment of berries. Mom is wearing her brother's Navy Pea Coat. Too Cool!



Mom at the Forest Grove Shearer Farm

Those Far from those Strawberry Fields

Early morning summertime
When Earth was a very small place—
A simple location —
Where one event
Was all encompassing.

Time was short and forever
In a wonderful place and
desires were cast on possibilities
of unfathomable purchases,
for a few quarters.

In front of Piggly Wiggly,
I waited for the
old yellow school bus to arrive
and collect children for strawberry picking
in those far away strawberry fields.

(Meaning and comments 3-15-2022): This poem is a fairly accurate slice of my childhood and I wrote it while Innkeeping at the Yacht House B&B in Pensacola, 2000. I'm a typical female, hopeful for something more promising, something worthwhile, something that will elevate my soul, although the world wallops me with the machinations of Set, Egyptian god of chaos and destruction.

When quite little, maybe since I was seven or eight, I would earn a few quarters strawberry picking. I don't know if I did this each summer but I remember going sophomore year of high school with my next-door neighbor friend Suzie Butler. She was kind of an onery kid when we chummed around and we goofed off too much picking strawberries that year and got fired. That was that. This brings up a few other memories of my childhood. My parents didn't have a lot of money and my mother often went with her mother to Forest Grove where my maternal grandmother grew up on a farm. (I wrote about this farm in a memoir called "Diaries of my Great Grandmother Mary Elizabeth Shearer"). Grandma, Mom, my sister, and I went to Seevees walnut grove. Or was it a filbert grove? (we called hazel nuts filberts). Seevees must have been a farm neighbor to my grandmother's old farm in Forest Grove. I remember coming up with this ditty, as a little girl of five or six: "Oh Seevee, oh Seevee, Do you watch your TV? Yes, I watch my TV, because my name is Seevee." As a child I often coined such ditties. Maybe my dad, who was a quiet simple man with a good sense of humor, encouraged this or helped me create ditties. On one occasion while we were picking nuts, a rain storm came in and my mom and grandma gathered me and my sister into the car to wait it out. I remember looking out the back seat window at another woman who was out in the orchard picking filberts. She was a mother and her son was in the orchard getting drenched. The mother ran to get him and take him to the shelter of their car. The thing was, the boy was retarded and in my little girl mind I thought

that the rainstorm would kill him because the mother was so panicked in retrieving him. Funny how a child's mind works.

My maternal grandfather came from a farm in Burnes, Oregon. His brother still owned a farm with strawberry fields when I was a child and my family went strawberry picking there. Mom used to tell me stories about how she and her mother picked ferns during the depression to sell to funeral homes for much needed money. This was at the Oregon Coast, Lincoln City now, where they lived until mom reached high school age during WWII. Interesting stories I hope to recollect when I reach the one poem I wrote about mom "I want to plant an orchid in my mother's purple heart."

Piggly Wiggly was the name of a grocery store on Lombard Street. I doubt the chain still exists. Another store was called Keenoes and of course Fred Meyers emerged during my childhood. Down the street from my grandparents' house was a store that my grandparent's called "the Japs" because it was run by Japanese. I suppose they were taking a term from the WWII era playbook. Another interesting memory happened at Keenoes. There was some kind of contest and the winner received one hundred dollars in groceries. This was back probably before the Kennedy assassination so that must have been a cart load of food.

Speaking of stores, another memory concerns a neighborhood corner store, off Greeley, a block from my maternal grandparents' house on Liberty Street. By the time I was in school, Mom had to take a job at Hometown Hardware to make ends meet. My siblings and I went to my grandmother's house before and after school until my parents got off work. Liberty Street wasn't far from our home on Boston Street which was across the street from my grade school Chief Joseph. My grandmother Bertie was a gentle soul. She liked collecting things and saving mementoes. In the basement of her simple house on Liberty Street, she used to mark the growth

of us kids on one of the supporting posts. I always thought that it would be a good record to look back on one day, but it faded away with the house when they moved. Grandma Bertie saved my pony tail from when I was two. Every once in a while she'd pull it out to show me. It was in a Sucrets' box. She also collected shells, rocks, fir trees she retrieved when we went camping and she had a collection of pennies and other coins that she'd pull out and show her grandkids, from time to time. Well, here's the heart of my little store memory. One day I got it into my head to grab a handful of these coins without Grandma knowing, without her permission, and go to that little neighborhood store and buy myself some candy. Which I did. I'm not sure why because I never really had a sweet tooth and in fact one Halloween my candy lasted until Easter. I think my grandmother somehow knew what I had done but she didn't directly ask me. I think she hinted at it to shame me. She was good at that. She didn't spank but she rubbed and pointed her two index fingers at us kids and said "Shhhhhh." Those far away strawberry fields are these distant childhood memories still present in my mind.



Deception is not harmony (poem written 1984. reflects my demeanor throughout my life.)

Deception is not harmony,
These facts of you—I don't agree.
And who-by-god
Did you think I was
To follow ways of your because?

Your language lacks my
Taste for breed —
A dictionary's what you need.

And if you think I long
For you –
You want in self-perception, too!



Sand Dunes by the Sea (Written in China or Thailand 1983-4.)

I'd forgotten
Who I once was
In sand dunes by the sea.
My brother and me
Running down the beach,
Holding hands
With the little red head.

I remember now
Trees, forests, and forts:
Davey, Daniel,
And what's his name?
Oregon ferns
Made perfect hovels,
My brother, oh Daniel.

Streams were
Made for catching salamanders
And getting wet;
A raft to cast
Filled with big boys –
Water is paradise.

A stairway
Became a waterfall
For tumbling down
With the big boys
And a puppy named Suzie.

A little man
Lived inside the wall,

An audience reacted
Inside the peanut
“don’t fall off the swing,
and crack your head open.”

I recall
Things to fear,
But Mom and Dad were perfect, then
(except when the audience reacted.)

There were sidewalks
for making trails
from colored chalk,
complete with instructions.
There was,
Robbie, Carrol, and Barbara Cox.
Boston Street
Where my brother Fell onto the pavement
And cracked his head.
We did not laugh.

And Arbor Lodge Park
Next to Chief Joseph Grade School
Where my brother drew a big blue swastika on the outside wall.
(I saw the used felt pens in the garbage
and told our mother.)

Yes,
I’d forgotten
Who I once was,
but the audience remembers.



(Comments and meaning 7-2-23) What a heavy hitting poem about childhood to unpack. First stanza, “I had forgotten” but am remembering now playing with my siblings when we were small, when our parents took us trailer camping to places in Oregon. The sand dunes by the sea was one of those places where we’d camp at Honeyman State Park near Coos River.

In the next stanza memories come back to me and I describe the kind of games we’d play around the forest campsites. Seems descriptive and self-explanatory. The things little children do when unleashed into nature. Then I recall playing on the stairwell of our house on Boston Street. My brother had his own room upstairs while my sister and I shared a room on the ground level. The big boys were my brother’s neighborhood friends Robbie Ranta and Philip Bressy. Suzie was a dog my parents gave me when I was four or five. That lasted about a year because Suzie would run from our yard and romp through the neighbor’s gardens. I thought it was funny. My parents and the neighbor’s didn’t. Mom took Suzie to relatives who lived on a farm in Forest Grove.

The next stanza becomes more esoteric and requires explanation. Most likely because I experienced bullying, belittling, and punishment trauma, my imagination ran loose into protective places, safe havens I'm guessing. Then again, maybe all kids have imaginary friends. I don't know. I'm not a psychologist except for my own mind. Very early in my childhood years I believed a little man lived inside the wall of my bedroom. I would talk to him, maybe only in my head, or maybe aloud, and I would call upon him when I was alone. I really can't say what the little man and I talked about or what I asked him. But he was there for me. Now the next line "an audience reacted inside the peanut" is a potent memory. As this traumatized little child, I also believed an actual audience lived in my head. They were voices I'd hear, voices directed to me whenever I encountered a difficult situation. A trauma. I retreated to my audience and they reacted to the things I was experiencing and their voices reassured me that I was all right. The audience lived in my head for many years. "The peanut" is simply what my brother and his boyhood friends called our heads. I guess that's why I added the phrase "don't fall off the swing and crack your head open." In our basement on Boston Street, we had a swing set on the concrete floor. I think the boys pushed me vigorously on that swing and it felt risky even to a child. Maybe while they were doing this the audience was reacting and warning me of the risk. Maybe the boys had scared me. Like my brother they were often mean and liked teasing me because, to them, I was but a stupid girl. This is all reinforced by the next stanza "I recall things to fear." And then I say what is one of my biggest childhood delusions, that mom and dad were perfect. In truth, they weren't. They were neglectful and hands off. I was mostly on my own. And this is probably why and when the audience reacted. The audience was my support system. It's a shame that a little girl must fall back on an imaginary little man in the wall and an audience in her head

in order to maneuver through the harshness she faces. My parents were basically absent to me, at least as far as being emotionally supportive.

Then the poem returns to pure description of events concerning my childhood girlfriends and things my brother did or what had happened to him.

“But the audience remembers” is a powerful ending for me. Maybe I try to forget all the harshness of my little girl childhood but the audience hasn’t forgotten. That says to me that these voices, this audience, was simply my subconscious mind speaking to me then and now. This goes with my theory that we are born with a wise Buddha mind pure and empty of all the clutter and trash the world imposes upon us. As we develop the mind becomes more and more cluttered, more susceptible to delusions until we either clear our minds and return to our birthright of a pure clear mind, or we eventually break, one way or another. All along in life this wise innate mind peers out, perhaps more so for the poet and artist. At least I feel this is the case for me with my poetry. I have always been who I now am on my struggle through childhood and adulthood and with subconscious wisdom speaking above the chaos and clutter. My audience as a little girl was just my mind telling me how to survive. And that hasn’t gone away. But who is the little man inside the wall? In the next poem I describe this little man in more detail.



Inside the Wall

My lover lives inside this wall,
The one that's pale green.
My lover is as little as
An orange tangerine.
My lover likes to play with me
On days I never find.
My lover's love's impossible
But I love him in my mind.

I don't remember when I wrote this. 30, 40 years ago anyway. As I mentioned in the previous poem, as a small child I believed a little man lived inside my bedroom wall which was a pale lime green. He was my imaginary friend that I often called upon while I lie in bed, maybe at night or when forced to nap. But I don't know why, in this poem, he is my lover. Maybe it is or isn't sexual. Maybe it just means my imaginary friend loves me because I didn't feel loved by my parents. And if there was something sexual that happened to that little girl who was me, it's a memory I have completely blocked out. Is my subconscious mind reminding me of something through this poem? I just don't know and maybe I never want to remember. I will leave it locked up and buried in a past far away.



Against the Wall

They all stood there—
4, no 5—
Leaning on the wall,
the 5th was me

between 5 and 3
all against the wall.

Only I, as I could see
had my back
facing me.
The other 4,
faces clear,
Had their backs against the wall.

Beyond the wall,
Elbow high,
Stretched “unknown”
to me,
and it was me
that I could see
facing toward
Eternity.

(Comments and meaning7-2-23) I wrote this poem while living on Night Hawk Way and it’s obviously about my childhood family. But what was my subconscious poetic mind trying to reveal? I have always felt out of step with everyone in my childhood family, for a variety of reasons. And I think this poem indicates that I have a much more expansive view of myself and the world. I am not with my back against the wall or pidgin holed. I believe in continual learning about the self and mind which means to unclutter it from all the notions family, society, religion, and the human world impose on the individual. I face eternity. I see it clearly because the wall only comes up to my elbow. It doesn’t block my view.

When I was a child I wrote titles on the backs of many of our family pictures. On this picture I wrote “5 Bums.” When my mom saw what I had done, she got a kick out of it.

This is what I wrote about this poem in my memoir “The Trouble with Brass:”

“For ten years I lived in my house in Phoenix. Like all new houses in the foothills of South Mountain, a block wall surrounded our backyard. I never met the neighbors behind us,

behind the back wall. But over the years I heard their baby grow into a child. I heard him cry, learn to talk, and play with other kids. But I never saw him.

“What is it about walls? They divide, limit, protect, and are a necessary part of any house. They describe the fears and conditions of a civilization. I have been to the Great Wall of China, one of the few manmade sights astronauts see from Space, or so they say. When communists built the Berlin Wall in 1961, I was in first grade. “Ich bin ein Berliner,” rang President Kennedy’s words of compassion for people suddenly locked behind a wall. In 1989, I watched the Berlin Wall crumbled with jubilant celebration. The Iron Curtain lifted. The Cold War ended. The Vietnam War Memorial in Washington D. C. is a healing wall, etched with the names of those killed in action.

“I have many barriers in my mind, phobic walls I cannot surpass. At the same time, I’ve had no walls, no barriers in my manic bubble phases. My AWOL from the Army was the first of my three manic bubbles. My mind ran away with me, my imagination soared, I believed myself invincible. I was a famous writer, writing about herself. I was a character from the Mitchner novel, *The Drifters*, on a spectacular adventure, escaping a chaotic world.”



Crater Lake, Oregon circa 1960

Impact Crater full of Hope

Though I dwell in an impact crater of hope,
I just can't do it, now.

I'm a bundled-up knot,
My stomach churns,
My heart palpitates,
Vultures circle overhead.
I'm alone in the desert
And cannot survive.
I don't even want to try.
Some days
I do not care to survive.

I survive?
Because I try,
Because I continue forward on a vision quest that has no limits beyond
My imagination.
My heart.

Beyond all hope, I fly through
Pain, agony, and sometimes
I burst with hope for survival . . .

But I am exhausted now,
And alone
(every one's got their own problems.)
I am
"oh, ah," all too tired
of trying day by day,
hour by hour,
Always stretching forward
To quench my thirst in a dry desolate land,
A difficult thorny land,
I pull myself across.

Tug and pull until I die.
Thus, sayeth the Prophet of Hope,
the spirit who roams Earth
Like a dust devil spinning high and long
disturbing those upon the scene,
those who cross my weary path of
murals on the wall of
hope, like my heart –
or is it that
hope is my heart
and both have no limit.

There is no limit to hope
As there is no limit

To adjusting
In order to survive.

Survive the desert crawl:
Behold!
All around there is water in hidden places—
Water pure and clean, like breath itself.
All the gold and jewels of Earth
are not as wonderful as water
to quench my thirst,
as I walk to the desert's edge
and paint bedazzling frescos
about adventures beyond my scope,
I am an impact crater full of hope.

(Comments and meaning Fourth of July, 2023) I wrote this poem while I was at the Yacht House B&B in Pensacola, Florida. The meaning seems simple and straight forward. I had a difficult childhood yet I struggled through it and set out on adventures—traveled to Europe then joined the Army. My time in the military was another struggle of me against a behemoth institution. That story is in my memoir “The Trouble with Brass.” I made it through with an honorable discharge then forged ahead with burst of hope to make something of myself. Went to college, taught English in Asia, married a standup guy with a good job, went to law school, moved to the rural desert, and ended up getting divorced. Lots of struggles along the way. Stress, obstacles, challenges. The divorce turned ugly. I got into a relationship with a temperamental, volatile man, and I succumbed to my own disabilities and delusions. Fortunately, the VA stepped in and awarded me full compensation. And even now, after years of this and that, I plow ahead with dreams and hopes despite living in that same difficult relationship (which I describe more fully in my memoir “The Desert’s Edge” and my Yacht House B&B collection of poems).

This poem is my life. It seems that harsh bombardments have impacted me throughout my life but I have never given up my hopes and dreams. I was merely waylaid a time or two but who doesn’t experience setbacks and difficulties? The point is to shovel them aside and survive

with dignity, clarity, and hope. And along the way, create brilliant frescoes and murals of all the wonders and beauty of this world.



She Stands upon Courageous Rocks (written in Thailand, 1984)

She stands upon courageous rocks,
A green sarong around her breasts,
A woven palm hat shades her
Gathered face.

Four hours fishing into a
Breaking surf where
Granite boulders have deep crevices,
And a thousand sand crabs
Hide, like wishes of an age ago.

She fishes alone,
Upon courageous rocks,
Never a word,
For herself or for the sea.

She is a silent dreamer,
Escaping remembered moments,
Her coal eyes bear down
On the sun's reflection.
She covers her shoulders
With a cotton shall; it has a patch.

She waits alone with
Two bamboo poles
And her empty basket.

She sees only fish on her line,
Filling the basket,
Frying in her pan,
Over a coal flame.

(although, she could sell them
in tomorrow's market, but)
Tomorrow isn't seen,
Yesterday's forgotten,
And the mid-day sun
Would take her,
But she's already done.

She fishes alone,
Upon courageous rocks,
In a green sarong,
And she doesn't notice the tar
Between nude bathers' toes.

(Comments and meaning Fourth of July, 2023) I wrote this poem in Thailand and comment on it in my collection "Echoes on a Rippling Pond." Although it seems to describe an old woman who is fishing, and literally was, I believe that it also describes me during my troubling childhood and all the years of my life. What else are you going to do? Stand upon crumbling scree and topple into the abyss?

These are the lines that really stand out to me when thinking about myself as a small child. Like the previous poem "Impact Crater" this poem is about maintaining hope and courage while facing torments and obstacles. "Granite boulders have deep crevices where a thousand sand crabs hide, like wishes of an age ago." To me this talks about the child suppressing trauma deep in the subconscious mind. Where all the traumatic memories lie hidden, tucked away. The trauma had dampened the lost wishes, the "wishes of long ago." Does a child lose her ability to dream or make wishes when faced with trauma? I somehow didn't because my spirit was courageous (courageous rocks as a foundation). "She is a silent dreamer" she cannot share her wishes and dreams with the people in the environment of her childhood. But she maintains them.

Maintains hope and tries to escape the “remembered moments” the trauma buried in her mind.

“Her eyes bear down on the sun’s reflection.” Maybe she can’t forget the trauma. The sun’s reflection shining on all her mind and that is why she stands on courageous rocks.

As a child I of course didn’t understand the neglect and bullying and abusive punishments foisted on me. I fought back. Maybe that’s why I “threw tantrums.” My spirit was strong even though I was painfully shy and introverted “a silent dreamer” who fished alone upon courageous rocks.



I was auditioning to be a princess but was too shy to win. St. Helens years before the eruption

A little Aspect

I am a little aspect
(from aspiration grew)
and what they wouldn’t tell me,
already that I knew.

No longer doesn’t matter —
(for matter is a cause)
and aspects are created
by a temporary pause.

(Comments and meaning Fourth of July, 2023) This is a word play poem that I wrote either in Thailand or on Night Haw Way. But it strikes me as to how I possibly felt as a small,

insignificant child or a child who felt insignificant given the distressful environment. No, I was not a legacy applicant to Harvard!

“Aspiration grew” means, again, that I had hopes and dreams and maybe that’s something we are born with, something innate. “What they wouldn’t tell me” sounds like my hands off and neglectful parents. “Already that I knew” sounds like I’m saying, yet again, that human beings are born with a pure clear mind, a wise mind already possessing Buddhahood. “No longer doesn’t matter—(for matter is a cause) and aspects are created by a temporary pause.” I think the meaning of this stanza is straight forward. Don’t concern the self with what the human world dumps on you. That is, social, religious, political, and psychological causes. Forget about all the constraints and labels that clutter the mind with untruths and non-realities, that which is not the essence of our true being. With that done, the true self emerges.

“Temporary pause” seems to be one of my most prevalent philosophical themes—always living in the moment at hand. I suppose even a little child possesses this wisdom and knows how to live in the moment, away from disturbing “causes” of others that don’t even pertain to the child’s identity. A mental pause, escape, break from vitriolic abuse.

Little Stubborn Heart

God Bless this little
Stubborn heart –
(because she won’t bless me)
Take her for a carriage ride,
and keep her company.

(I wrote this poem while I had a difficult time in Thailand, 1984. Par for the course.)



Why is my uncle Bill staring down my brother?

Life I Struggle Through (circa 2000)

Life I struggle through
 The struggle is not the end
 It is always the beginning
 The now
 The present
 The happening—madness
 Or Hope?

For some reason —
 (unbeknownst to the seagull
 or the Doberman proud)
 Struggle is the ceaseless movement
 Of a cloud
 About a world
 Of spectacular speculation
 As stupendous
 As “right on hit.”

As
 The Earth, this solar planet
 That offers food and shelter
 And ALWAYS struggle
 Even when—and
 Whether or not —
 I choose to adventure through life
 I struggle on and on and on.

(Comments and meaning Fourth of July, 2023) Seems self-explanatory. Struggle and hope. “The Doberman proud” lives in the moment and doesn’t struggle emotionally and

mentally. Same with the seagull who soars above the helm until it dies. (see my poem in my collection “By the Moon Gate.”) I have raised Doberman Pinchers since my first two in 1999, Minnie and Max. Now I have what may be my last Dobe, a beautiful red male named Red. I got him from the site rescueme.com, an animal rescue site worth every cent of any donation.

“Struggle is the ceaseless movement of a cloud” means it never ends. “Right on Hit” is slang from my current spouse, and I think I’m saying that with life comes struggle, yeah sure, but also many beautiful, fascinating, spectacular things along the way. And no matter how we chose to live our lives, to live is to survive is to struggle. Maybe this is the wisdom of that little girl child I once was and always am.



I am a fly (How the world can make you feel. 1984)

I am a fly.
That is it, that is it, all it,
Just a fly here and now,
Only just a fly, right now.

Although
There are pheromones
(which other flies understand –
as well as I).

But basically, there is only –
“am now”
buzz until no buzz.

Maggots don’t think

About how disgusting they are,
To you and me (people, obviously).
They are just in the
Here and now –
Moving to devour.
Only pheromones
Chase them away.

(Sometimes, I want to be a maggot.)

(Comments and meaning Fourth of July, 2023) The only thing I can say about this self-explanatory poem is that other people—toxic siblings, parents, spouses, cultures, societies, religions . . . can make one feel pretty low about the self. Depressed. But then the most grotesque creature imaginable, a maggot, lives in the moment empty of everything except instincts (pheromones) to survive. Perhaps there's some beauty and wisdom in this simplicity. "I'm wanting to be a maggot" means I want to shed myself of all the shit (maggots live in shit) and toxic attitudes dumped on me and just live life.



Hidden Tear (1984)

How deeply falls a hidden tear,
When heedless voices cry.
Left amid all that we hear,
How aimlessly we try.

If waters only could flow free,
Out from the wells dug deep,

Alas, but then we just might be,
Unbound by what we keep.

(Comments and meaning Fourth of July, 2023) Self-explanatory. But imagine a little kid accosted with “heedless voices” which means bullying and other harsh toxic behaviors. The kid is in the middle of all the chaos yet she tries. Is it aimless? Yes, because the toxic behavior doesn’t stop. Maybe the second stanza is about shedding these toxic memories, PTSD, when becoming an adult. If we can free these haunting memories then we free ourselves of the trauma stored deep in the subconscious mind (the wells dug deep). It’s one of the free-flowing poems that popped from my mind while I was enduring culture shock in Thailand.



Teri and Suzie “true twins” (one of the captions I wrote on the back as a child)

These Eyes (1984)

These eyes grow old and tired,
Yet on, they wear each day –
With everything that guides them,
And with all that comes their way.

These eyes of mine are growing old –
I may even watch them die.
But seeing’s all I’ll let them do,
For I’ll never let them cry.

(Comments and meaning Fourth of July, 2023) Sounds like a poem about trying to be steadfast and brave in a world of hurt; trying to see clearly and not let the harshness of the human

world crush you. It's another free-flowing poem that came from my thoughts while I lived in Thailand. But it seems to fit me as that little girl. At the same time, I did cry then, in fits of rage that my parents called "tantrums." Maybe this poem is me as an adult or child who has matured beyond the need to cry with uncontrollable rage. A child cries for a variety of reasons: out of hunger, thirst, or fear, and a need for attention or for help. Why would a parent decide the child needs to be punished for inappropriate behavior when the child is crying?

Part II: Poems about my Sister, Parents, and Grandparents



My sister and I were never close probably because of the four years between us and because I don't think she experienced the trauma I was going through as a little child. I don't believe my brother bullied her like he did me and I know my parents didn't punish her with water treatments because my sister was an even-keeled child and did not "throw tantrums" like I did. Additionally, we really didn't share any interests. She loved sports. I didn't. I was artistic and adventuresome; she often took to playing alone when we went on camping trips. Maybe she was smart and avoided my brother. I really don't remember much about our childhood together. I don't think I bullied her relentlessly although there may have been some kid stuff but if there was, it was minute in comparison to what my brother put me through.

My sister wrote me letters while I was in the Army, I visited her trailer home in Gaston, Oregon after she had her baby, my niece. I tried having a relationship with my niece and did so for many years. She liked coming to Arizona to visit her grandparents, my mom and dad. When I had the B&B in Pensacola for two years, I arranged for my sister and niece to visit me along with my parents. I thought we had a great time and my sister and her daughter loved my Dobermans Minnie and Max and their puppies. My next encounter with my sister occurred when my widowed mom decided to take my sister and I on a cruise around South America. This was in 2010 and at the time I was living on disability because of a service-connected condition. Maybe my sister frowned on my “suddenly” being disabled. I just don’t know. Maybe, like a lot of people, she couldn’t understand how I had succumbed to a condition or worse yet, maybe she thought I was a fake. Why would I think this way about my sister? Let me explain.

It began with little things. For example, on one visit to my mom’s place in Bullhead City, Mom asked my sister and I what heirlooms we would like so she could specify them in her will. My sister stepped up, like she was in charge, and named this and that for herself and her daughter. I said that all I wanted was an old clock that had belonged to my dad and my sister said, “that goes to our brother” as if she didn’t want me to have anything I wanted. As if I were an opportunist. Anyway, it was little things like this that, in retrospect, added up.

About this time, soon after the cruise, she stopped sending me Christmas presents and even cards and often if I texted her she didn’t reply. This all sounds so petty but I’m trying to build up to the heart of what drove me over the edge about her. I should also note, regarding our not being close, that the only times we spoke over the phone during our entire adult lives occurred just before the cruise, one time when I butt-dialed her number while feeding my

animals, and one time when mom shoved the phone in my face. And that time my sister said, “What do you want?” and I hung up.

There are two things that really got to me. The first occurred perhaps 2017 when Mom invited me to the Oregon coast after I hadn’t been to Oregon for nearly twenty years. At the beach house Mom rented, she offered me the guestroom but then my sister insisted that it go to her daughter and son-in-law who were coming up for the weekend and she put me on a bunk bed in the basement. That didn’t sit well with me and I went home with bad feelings about that trip. Her daughter and son-in-law were not even that friendly to me. They acted like I was creepy and didn’t seem to appreciate the gifts I had brought them—wooden carvings of African animals that came from my import export business. The son-in-law even joked, “I hope we don’t get fined for having illegal wood.” It’s stupid, I know, but it made me feel uncomfortable and unwelcomed.

A few years after this, I was trying to market my memoir “The Trouble with Brass” on Facebook. One day, I went to my sister’s FB page. We really didn’t send each other messages or anything like that. I think maybe I was curious or wanted to invite her to my page. To my astonishment, she had lifted my military picture off my Facebook page and put it on her FB banner because the photo had her in it. I know I’m possibly sounding petty now, but what bothered me was that she didn’t even post a “Like” on my page. Let alone make some kind of sisterly remark to me about my attempt to promote my memoir or about my stint in the Army which is what my FB page was all about. And when she posted my picture in her FB banner, she said “This is me before my childhood house.” No mention of me. I posted to her page and told her to take my military picture down from her FB banner then I began posting different messages, nothing nasty but things like “I didn’t appreciate your indifference; that you dishonored me; and if you want the picture for just yourself, cut me out of it.” I also sent her a

large copy of that same military picture of me with her, and autographed it, and I sent her the following five poems that describe what I thought about her disrespect and indifference toward me. I wrote these poems while I was in Thailand and facing four jealous teachers. The Thai are status conscious and I had walked into the English department earning more pay as a foreign contract teacher. These Thai teachers were upset by this and were very twofaced toward me. They would shun me unless I was with someone of import then they were polite and friendly to me.

I asked my sister to write me and explain what I had done to her to make her so disrespectful toward me. But she never wrote that letter. Probably discounted it. There's a lot of indifference in my childhood family. Always has been. I think it comes from my parents hands off approach to parenting. I think their negligence spawned an attitude of indifference.



Absolutely and Of course

Absolutely!
(and of course)
what do you think I meant?
(The paths have all been flooded –
by you alone, and yet . . .)

Absolutely and forever,
Never on today,
And if you had a boat to row –
You'd find no time to stay.



It was You

It was you
Who slammed the cellar door
Thought not about the key
Then tried to talk about yourself
Forgetting there was me.

It was you
Who broke the window Pane
Not thinking of the glass
(and as my blood dripped to the floor
you utterly would laugh).

Yes, it was you
Who stood beneath the beam
In want of my support
(and will you ever realize)
it's me who has retort.



A Spider in Her Hair

You say she's very nice,
(but have you seen her twice?)
She's a desultory witch!
(when she makes her switch).

But you are right –
Of time, at most, she wears a smile
(from which behind her charms compile).



A Woman Unaware

I met a woman unaware
Of a spider in her hair.
It dangled down an inch above
a speckled brooch she wore for love.

I greeted her with due effort
And caught her smiling in retort.
Then not there being one word said,
Her hair became the spider's web.



You cannot stop my song

You cannot stop my song,
Internal vows sing too long.
This music is my destiny,
Unburdened by humanity,
You cannot stop my song.

And do not look at me,
As though I lack your sanity.

Talk about an odd sort of
Looking guy –
I'd like to know what that is,
Growing on your eye.

Letter I wrote to my sister: circa 2018



“For some reason our Creator wants us to face obstacles and overcome them. Because we believe in his power, we survive. He created us to learn how to respect one another. Respect the Earth and our parents. Our uncles, our sisters and brothers. We are a family of people under the galaxy.” John Eldron, O’odham medicine man and hero of the Vietnam War (artwork of the sun dagger event at Chaco Canyon from my novel “The Man from Sacaton.”)

Yes sister, you cancelled me again. But you cannot unfriend a sister. Not me. Let me break it down for you sister. The year 2000 you visited me at the Yacht House B&B. All seemed okay. We were never close but so what. We are sisters. Don’t have to be BFFs. Then in 2010 on the South American Cruise with Mom, did you not pilfer through my money belt and helped yourself to over \$300? I found it peculiar behavior, but let it go. Then, after twenty years, I visited PDX in 2015, or so. Mom invited me, not you. I already explained how you disregarded me and disrespected me during my visit. Okay. We’re not close. Oh well. My sister has her own world. Then last September Mom comes waltzing back to BHC and nobody tells me. I was caught unaware. You were discourteous to me, irresponsible really, because you did not inform

me of her condition or that she was returning. Not even a letter. And for some reason, Mom wanted nothing to do with me until she realized she couldn't drive. DID YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH THIS??? I wonder. Okay. Oh well. We are not close. The dysfunction of my family is called indifference. Then last year I saw you display my military photo of you and me on your FB banner. You took it from my page with no regard to me. No comment to me, EVER. No mention of me anywhere. THE PICTURE WAS ALL ABOUT YOU. Well, this disturbed me, but I let it go. Then before Mom left BHC and returned to PDX, I tried to work with you to hook her up with a new phone. I left a message, you called back, HIGH ON THE HORSE, rude to me probably because I wasn't friendly enough for you when Mom shoved the phone in my face. "What do you want!!!???" you said like an asshole.

Honestly, I am not indifferent to this matter between us. I will not disappear and go away. You cannot un-friend your sister in order to keep your reputation untarnished. That seems like a sin against God. Between you and me, You've stolen money from me, disrespected me, and DISHONORED ME. Of late, you were discourteous and rude to me. Do you still wonder why I might not appreciate all the goodness you think you possess? It's okay not to be close. But it's not okay to be so disrespectful to your sister. I have reason to disrespect you but I don't believe I have ever shown you such discourtesy, disrespect OR DISREGARD. If I have, please let me know. List your grievances so I can understand your inconsiderate behavior. Perhaps I too need to redeem my soul.

P. S. Here are the letters you sent me when I was in the Army. I don't know why I ever kept them.

(Comments 7-17-23: This letter sounds harsh, I know, but my sister's disregard and indifference deeply affected me. And she never wrote back. She merely sent me a legal paper

concerning my mother. Sometimes it's simply not worth even thinking about vapid childhood family relationships and I only present them in this collection to provide a backdrop to the kind of family I had. Mentally, emotionally, I have moved on, far away, and now feel nothing but indifference toward them. It's something my parents probably instilled in my mind.)



To my parents

It's for them
That I will do it:
Make it right
Make it wealth.
I don't care
What others tell me,
It's for them
I dedicate myself.

For myself,
For myself,
How boring, vapid, dull.
But for them
It's all worthwhile,
And for them
I want to glow.

For them
Who never knew me
That is—my real soul
But for them,
Who always loved me,
No matter how I'd go.

They, who were simple
At their best,
Though times
I didn't know,
That all their ways
were shaping me
No matter what they'd show.

Yes, for them
I will do it
A chief d'oeuvre of my life,
For them whom I love and cherish,
I give you all the reaping of
Our strife.

(Comments and meaning Fourth of July, 2023) A poem I wrote in Thailand, 1984. I sent it to Mom when she was 89 and I doubt she even read it. Before then, however, I had never felt like giving it to her. Both my parents worked and during most of my childhood they were active square dancers in the Castle Eighters Club. Otherwise, they enjoyed camping, fishing, and hunting. I guess you might say they came from pioneer stock. They also loved spectator sports and sports programs on TV—football, basketball, and baseball games, and during my teen years they became active golfers and bowlers. My sister also became a square dancer and she bowled and played golf with them. Not me. I never was interested in sports and when I attempted to bowl or play golf, my dismal scores reflected this sentiment. Unlike my sister, I was never in sync with my parents and their interests except I did enjoy the great outdoors, although I did not like the activity of hunting and killing deer.



He is as my Grandfather was (written in the 1990's)

He is as my grandfather was;
He like his father now.
And I am glad he has grown old
And is living a long life.

Where am I, but in the middle,
A day in the age of life.
Money is an important matter,
That's how we survive.

But he is as my grandfather was,
My father now.
He has survived long and proud
Of "He,"
and of me
the one who wants to survive with
glee and power and a tropical shower
of gardenias and roses and honeysuckle
and jasmine and lemon freshly squeezed
on a hot humid day
In play at the beaches
Of my delight.

He is simpler, that old man now.
And he has slowed by Parkinson's
(although he does well with medication).
He must breathe slower than I, have much
Less battles and concerns
Except,
He must know more about dying, in a way,
He must know so much more than I,
That one more breath may bring the moment
That he die.

And I must prepare for that moment too,
In whatever way I can

By poetry, prose, or telephone call,
I must prepare for that moment too.
He is as my grandfather was. An old man
I remember well.

(Comments and meaning 7-9-23) My father and his father were both honest, true, hardworking, and simple men. I never felt emotionally entangled with my father in the way I did with my mother. Maybe this is true for everyone. It seems that I spent my life feeling my mother's neglect, in love and participation in my life, and never really felt this way toward my father. It seems I expected more from my mother and she seemed harsher when she punished me or neglected me.

My father was a company man. He worked at the Northwest Natural Gas Company his entire life, starting with reading gas meters and ending as an office manager of the meter readers. He in fact got me a summer intern job reading gas meters. I did this for two summers while I was an undergraduate at Portland State University.



Old Man Come to Call (1980's. My grandfather Stanly. Dad's dad.)

Old man –
You come to call.
The years—those years
Thrice my own and more.
Old man old man
Why do you call?

You're years away
Your years away,
Finally, you've come to call
You've come to call.
I am so small.

Old man, old man, old man,
Always old to me
I've been told
And now I know
You've come to call
You've come to call.

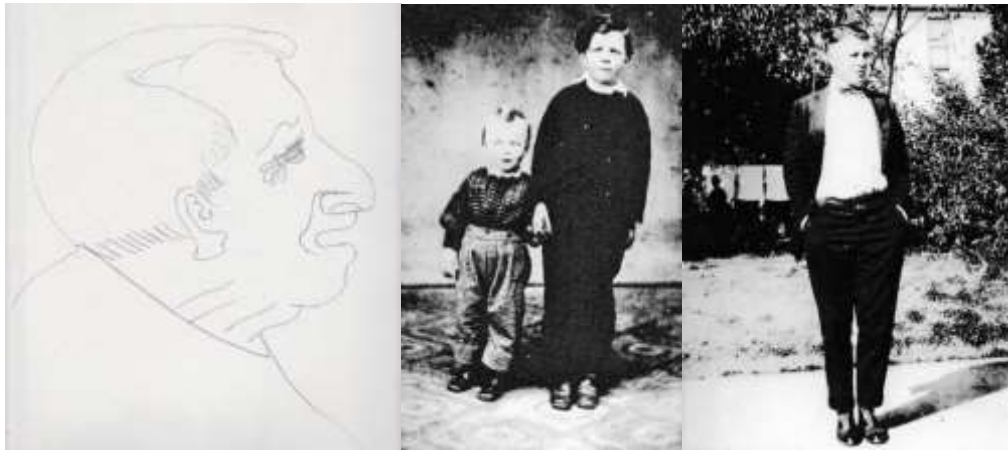
Afraid to leave,
I've been told,
Old man, old man,
Is it fear that takes the years?
No matter—no—none at all.
Come to call, come to call.

Away, old man
Away from me
Away from you
Far away, far far away
Or not at all
Old man, come to call, come to call.

(Comments and meaning 7-9-23): I was in Thailand when I wrote this poem about my Grandpa Stan. I had just received a letter from Mom telling me about his passing. He was in the hospital, awoke from sleep, and became fearful of where he was, and this fear, evidently, caused him to pass away close to the age of 95.

I have very fond memories of this dear old man. He often joined my family and maternal grandparents on camping, fishing, and hunting trips. He told my mother that she came from good people and that he liked being around her relatives. He never learned to drive a car and I really don't remember what kind of work he did before he retired from the Gas Company which was well before I came along. As a little girl I would tease that his nose looked like a strawberry. One Gas Company picnic, a bee invaded our table and instead of swatting it away, my gentle old granddad petted the bee with his finger. It made a lasting impression on me.

When I was in high school Grandpa Stan liked to take turns staying at the homes of his five kids and 14 grandkids. He always took the bus. On one occasion, when he was leaving our house on Maplecrest Drive and I was on my way to class, he kissed me on my head, gave me ten dollars, then walked down the hill to the bus stop. That too greatly impressed me.



Stanly Allen born circa 1897



Over the Years Many (poem about Grandma Allen, father's mother who died when I was five)

Over the years many—
 My soul stretches back,
 Longing to touch
 An old woman—dead
 20, 30 years.

She had, at one time, gingerly,
 Patiently, touched and soothed
 My little
 Blossoming soul.

The old woman sings,
 In a raspy solid
 Norwegian voice,
 As she cradles the child in her arms.

The old woman rocks
 In a large wooden chair
 That creaks
 Against wooden boards
 In an old red house
 Tucked far away

Along a North Portland Street.

My father
Grew up poor,
In that house.
Did she sing the same songs
To her boy child?

The song returns
Drowning out all else.
It lulls the child
So warm and snug
In those large arms
Scared by her time.

Warm arms. Cool arms,
Embracing, loving,
Sincere.
A simple woman
Who held me dear.

She sings “a song of sixpence . . .”
It makes no sense
(although blackbirds have always danced
in my head.)

The words are timeless now,
Held in a moment
Of caressing a child’s soul,
Eternally.

The rocker creaks,
As she sings “a pocket full of rye.”
I am asleep now,
Safe
In my grandmother’s arms.

(Comments and meaning Fourth of July, 2023) Her grandchildren called her Grandma Allen because she didn’t like her Norwegian name Sigfred. She died when I was five and I don’t have strong memories of her. Except of her holding me on her rocking chair and singing “a pocket full of rye.” She died at age sixty and had suffered diabetes most likely because of a diet

rich in sweets and meats. But this poem that I wrote years ago, maybe in Thailand, offers a tender memory of the old woman who raised four boys and one daughter with very little money.



To myself in 20 years

To myself in 20 years
I dedicate this poem.
If still around—how far away,
Have you really grown?

Remember me at 27th place
Life here is a poet's soul,
Idealistic visions often come,
Before another goal.

How is your life in 20 years?
Have you reached my dreams today?
Perhaps no more nor even less,
Than those that slipped away.

My friends today, so clear to me,
Can they still be found?
Who's lost along the way of time?
What new friends are around?

These days of mine are like the gull's
Up, soar, then down to earth,
But after all the scathing styles
I return to my nature's worth.

Away from you are 20 years,
What is (one year, one day) the truth?
It must seem strange to come across
A moment from your youth.

The babies now, that I love dear,

Blood of loved ones, blood, my blood.
How do they look? How do they act?
They love you? They're still loved?

To myself in 20 years
I'd like to sing this song,
I love myself; I love you too,
No matter what's gone wrong.

The old ones now
How long ago, did they end-up dead?
Remembering now in twenty years,
The simple lives they led.

Have you at least one lover found
For you because of you?
How many ins and outs beyond
A weight to carry through?

By now I've come to realize
My spirit hates to rest,
And you who's grown away from me,
Which time do you like best?

I call myself in 20 years
And if you've gone away
I hope someone remembers me
By the words I've tried to say.

There's one thing more, before I am through,
A favor, I ask of thee,
If still around in 20 years
Please write your words to me.

(Addendum to this poem, 8/12/2021): It's nearly 40 years since I wrote this poem and I never wrote back to myself after twenty years. I really haven't had surges of poetic inspiration for several years. My focus has been on my novels which I am now fervently trying to get in shape for publication. It's also nearly twenty years since the horrific events of 9/11 and last night, as I fell asleep, I had the urge to write this addendum. These are the days of Covid, of

unrest in the US because of the rightwing racist movement, Trumpism and so on. A time of who knows if the climate will sustain human life anymore.



My great aunt,
Lived, grew sort of old,
And then she died of cancer.
She never married.
She died in a rest home,
Unaware, and sort of old
My great aunt,
So many go your way.

(Comments and meaning Fourth of July, 2023) I remember Aunt Bertha as well. She flew out to Oregon from Illinois when I was perhaps 5. Back then, meeting someone at the airport was monumental. Mom told me Bertha had been active in politics, legislating for the right to have color in margarine, or some such thing.



Mein pauvre father (1984 written in Thailand. I think I had resentment toward the patriarchy of the Christian God.)

My Father Who Art a Haven (Mein Pauvre Father)

Ephesians 5

Peter 3

Yeek –

Ahhkh!

Oh, yeah

Father, father, father

(my mother is/was God)

SUBMIT???!!!

(adsum, but . . .)

a Father's love kills
your daughter's heart.

Away from you

Away from me

Who leads

Who follows

For thine is the

POW her.

Be of one mind and heart.

In thought, spread love.

Oh, sweet thoughts make a lovely spread.

A father's love: absent, hidden, vanquished, dissolved.

Where is he who has this love of thine?
My father art thou in Haven.
Goals of Marriage: Romans 12:15: Don't be proud!! (you SOB)
Weeping will low.

Oh, Father
Thine is the Kin's doom,
Dumb, dung.
But what is love? Corinthians 13:4
Best of all is the following way.
Follower!
Hebrews 13: Feel with them as if you were there, that is, those in prison.

Mein Pauvre Father
Love never gives up—
(every daughter writes a GD poem
about her father).
I can love anybody, but,
Please—
Don't ask me to love
That one!!

Denomination,
Domination,
Demonstration,
A daughter's strength is strong strong strong.
You were wrong
You weak sneak freak.

Help is brave, humble mumble.
Why do we stumble and crumble?
Dear father,
A daughter's love is
Filtered through you, you you
How do you do do
(me too?)
by the way—I love you anyway.
Because —
We don't help ourselves—
Can we?
Can't we?
Won't we?
Unlikely.
Like you, like me.
Clear out (Romans 13)
(at least I've tried).

A father's love
Kills
Your daughter's heart.
Make amends,
Peace
Before the Altar (Mathew 5:23)
Falter, how well it be
In ane
Thy will be daddy
Forever.

(Comments and meaning 7-2-23) To be honest, this poem seems angry, like I'm struggling to come to terms with patriarchy, with a Daddy God. Please take it with a grain of salt and don't put relentless meaning to it. I don't. I really can't. While in Thailand I suffered a great amount of culture shock and depression and the missionaries surrounding me pulled me into their religious sway. But as I've described in the previous poem about my father, a good, wholesome man, I always had trouble with the concept that men are superior to women and that women come from their ribs to serve them. There you are. How can I reconcile having a Father in Heaven, haven (my refuge) when that father sees me as less significant than the male of our human species. Even when religious myself, I don't think I could fully accept this. And I believe this poem is more an angry diatribe at that father god than at my father. I must have looked up a lot of scripture to write this poem and when I did it wasn't slow and methodical, that is, I didn't spend days writing this poem and carefully researching the verses. I believe I jotted down this poem as I paged through the Bible I was using at the time, one that has a lot of underlining and notes. In the end, religion wasn't for me. It doesn't enhance how I view and feel about myself. About my identity as a human being. And I don't hold my father at fault for who he was and how he perceived himself and the world. I believe he loved me in his way and I loved him in mine. I respected him as a person, a decent man, but there just wasn't any earth-shattering connection

between us except a superficial bond. My daddy was a quiet unimposing man who loved to be funny. Although he expected Mom to wait on him hand and foot, which she did, Daddy enjoyed his life and had a good sense of humor that was almost constant. He would be a prime candidate for best “daddy joke” maker of the year. For example, when taking an elevator and a fat person got on, he’d call them elevator people. “Here comes an elevator person.” All my life, as a small child, especially during high school and through my adult life, Daddy cracked jokes. I did not strive to have a close, meaningful relationship with him like I did with my mother which I express in the last poem of this collection and its commentary. It’s the only poem I wrote specifically about, or to, my mother.



An orchid for my mother's purple heart

I want to plant an orchid
In my mother's purple heart,
A reminder from a daughter,
That she never really parts.

(Comments and meaning 7-2-23): All my life, certainly during my young adult life, I've strived for some kind of close and meaningful relationship with my mother. But it always seemed that she just wasn't there for me, in any kind of deep loving way. Maybe I grew up seeking her love and always felt it was lacking. In the end, just prior to the pandemic and before my ninety-year-old mother moved-in with my sister permanently, she came down to her home in Bullhead City, near to where I live, and she didn't want to have anything to do with me. She had

been spending the summers in Portland for as long as she and my father, before he passed away in 2005, had been living in a retirement park in Bullhead City. Mom didn't call me or let me know she was in town on this last return trip. She simply rejected me and this is how our story ended. But she wasn't senile. It's not that she didn't know me. She simply didn't want me around her. And since then, I have not heard anything from her or about her except for a pamphlet my sister sent of the memory care home she finally placed my mother into. I don't have any relationship with my sister and I don't even know if Mom is still alive. But I don't spend much time dwelling on my childhood family like I did when Mom first rejected me. It's all in the past. Childhood family is what it is and I come from a family that is, or seems to me, quite indifferent, uninvolved, and not at all loving. How did it end up this way? Why did my mother, before she succumbed to her dwindling final years, decide she could no longer tolerate me? It's a long story, a life's story, which I hope to relate as I explain the meaning of this short and simple poem.

Who was my mother? Probably like all little children, I grew up believing my mother was a good, wonderful mother, the best there ever could be. It's the delusion of a child. What else is the child going to think?

I must have been a difficult child for my mother because of my restless spirit, intellect, and difficult temperament. Besides her harsh punishments, Mom also threatened to leave me with her relatives on a farm in Forest Grove where she had taken my dog Suzie when we could no longer keep her. "They'll teach you to behave," she'd say as if farm people wouldn't put up with my tormented disposition. I don't know whether my mom was afraid of me, offended by me, or simply angry at my behavior.

There were many things as a young adult that troubled me, about my relationship with Mom. On my 21st birthday I called Mom to ask why she hadn't called me for my birthday. I only

remember her saying to me, “We have our own lives too, you know.” This sounds harsh and maybe I pried it from her, after complaining a bit. But the point is I could never feel close to her or more precisely she could never become close to me. Another time, when I was about to leave for my teaching job in China, I called her and after some prodding I caused her to cry. Maybe I complained that she acted like she just didn’t care that I’d be gone for a few years. And I think I was glad to have made her cry because I had gotten some kind of reaction from her.

While I was married to my first husband, I often visited my parents and I invited them on several trips. I escorted them to Sante Fe and Taos, to New Orleans, to Washington DC, and NYC and Boston, and I took them on a grand trip to the Galapagos to see a solar eclipse. I tried to be involved with them and I believe they enjoyed these trips. But it perhaps all changed after I divorced my first husband and eventually fell into disability. A story I explain in my memoirs “The Trouble with Brass” and “The Desert’s Edge.”

During my difficult times, I asked my parents for help. And they helped me out financially. But maybe this didn’t sit well with Mom. When I found myself in a troubling relationship with my second husband, I put my property up for a short sale and moved to Golden Valley to live near my widowed mother in Bullhead City. My husband ended up following me and for a variety of reasons, I don’t believe my mother cared for my second husband, not like she had my first one. Over the months I believe she became more and more uncomfortable with me. At one point, she even accused me of stealing a package of coffee off her porch, one my sister had sent her. She suggested that perhaps my husband had somehow mistakenly scooped it up when we were leaving or some such ridiculous story. One day, I confronted her about my sister’s indifference toward me. I had been texting my sister and not getting any responses. “Oh, well,” Mom said. “She’s busy with her grandsons.” It was a pointless excuse. And I asked Mom if she

was talking to my sister and saying bad things about me. This really upset Mom and I had to quickly back off and tell her I loved her. But I think my confrontation put her on edge, about me, because it was after this that she didn't want anything to do with me when she returned from her summer trip to Portland.

Despite her attempts to ignore me, I still showed up at her home to check on her. She acted afraid of me. I asked her why she was avoiding me, why she hadn't called to tell me she was back in town, and she claimed that she didn't call anyone anymore. She even said that she thought she could just run into us at casino and all was good. Then she practically chased me out of her home because she needed to get to the casino for her buffet lunch.

But during this last time in Bullhead City, Mom came to a point where she could no longer drive and she called me and asked me and my spouse to take her to casino every day and we did for several months. If we were late, she'd call and ask where we were which is why I know her story that she doesn't call anyone anymore wasn't quite true. When her ride didn't show up to take her to the Las Vegas airport she called me and we took her there. That was the last time I saw her.

Now for the meaning of this poem that I wrote in my mid-twenties when in Thailand where orchids are abundant. "I want to plant an orchid in my mother's purple heart." Even then I believed she had felt somehow wounded by me like she carried the scars of my childhood "bad behavior." When I began shedding the delusions I had formed as a child, I realized that it was Mom's bad behavior that caused my emotional disability in later life. Not mine. "A reminder from a daughter, that she never really parts" seems so ominous so foreshadowing for what was to ultimately happen. Although she rejected me, I am still her daughter and I want to give her a precious gift. I want to plant an orchid in her wounded heart.

In fact, when I came home from Thailand after being away for two years, I bought a bouquet of orchid sprigs to take to Mom. I had cabled my parents to meet me at the airport, gave the time and date, but they didn't show and I took a taxi to their house. I asked them why they hadn't met me and Mom said, "We didn't understand the cable." It seemed a typical response. I gave her the orchids and she acted pleased but it seemed fake somehow. Like my life was a farce.

The takeaway. Not to let what cannot change pull me down, keep a clear head, and be glad I have progressed away from an unhealthy childhood and learned to value myself for myself. As one of my favorite poems ends, "In the wake, observeth me, I am alone and yet surrounded by the sea."



My painting and poem from Thailand, 1984

Here is a letter I wrote to Mom during her last time in Bullhead City. September 2018

I wouldn't bring up what I am saying in this letter. But for some reason, you've decided to cut me off. "Oh, I don't call anyone anymore!" you said when I came to check on you. Making me feel like a fool for bringing you my new phone number and asking you for yours. Your words told me, I'm a lost cause. Not worthwhile. A disturbance to you. No good. A bad seed. You see, I don't know what you're thinking because you shut me out without even telling me why. Are you afraid of me? Have you always been afraid of me because I was born with a condition you don't like? Your indifference is nothing new. I've lived with it all my life. You weren't an involved parent. You've never been one to confront issues. To discuss anything less than what's pleasant. You never came to me to say what's on your mind. Never gave me constructive advice. I went to college on my own accord. I tried to make something of myself despite a lack of parental support, interest, or involvement in my life.

Now, because you decide to cut me off, I'm compelled to get a few things off my chest. You've obviously made up your mind about me. Something you probably did when I was a child. And why does this all come out now, after 60 years? Because you cut me off and because some events from my childhood were too painful to recount. My childhood memories of traumatic events became suppressed in my mind. Only later in my life did I recall the trauma I experienced as a little girl. Only now do I bring it up because you've chosen to turn me away.

My childhood did not have structure and guidance. My parents did not provide incentive for getting good grades but these complaints are trivial compared to what I suffered as a little girl. My childhood was NOT a safe and good place to be. While I was in the Army and after my divorce, I sought psychiatric help. My VA psychiatrists told me I have PTSD, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, in addition to the condition I was born with. How did I end up with PTSD? When I was a little girl I had manic seizures beyond my control that probably distressed you. I

don't think you even liked me because of my quirky aberrant behavior. I was shy and reserved but very charged with a creative, thinking mind. You took me to a child psychologist, a Mr. Stevens at the University of Portland. Do you remember, Mother? He recommended that when I threw "tantrums" you put me in the bathroom and throw water on me. Didn't you notice, when I tore off my clothes during these punishment sessions, that you were traumatizing an already troubled child. Yet, you continued. This is the source of my PTSD, something I suppressed for years until it was brought out by my VA psychiatrists. But out of respect, I said nothing to you about it. I probably learned from you not to confront issues that aren't pleasant. Not to talk about anything. But now I am compelled to tell you the truth because you have decided "not to call me anymore."

Your little punishment sessions aren't the only reason I suffered childhood PTSD. Mother, don't you find it odd that my brother hasn't had anything to do with me for the past thirty, forty years? Or is it you just couldn't care less!!! His son was a child molester. Well, dear Mother, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. Don't you think it odd that when I was a child I didn't talk to my brother? Do you remember I had nothing to do with him? That I kept away from him? Perhaps you knew all along that he molested me but you kept it quiet because you don't confront issues. Guess what? He also traumatized me with PTSD. No, I didn't have a healthy childhood. And what happened to me as a child has haunted me all my life, mostly subconsciously. The abuse affected my already challenged mental health. But mental illness has a terrible stigma. It's not something we talk about. It's not something we respect.

And why was it when I got an early discharge from the Army you told my sister that "Oh, she's probably pregnant" thinking the very worst of me. I believe you've always talked to my sister about me. Avoided me. You never asked me about the trauma I went through in the Army.

You didn't say a word when I enlisted although you knew I suffered mental problems. Guess what? I went in with good intentions but the Army was a very bad environment and I suffered a breakdown and overdosed from the drugs they gave me. Something you never knew about. You probably didn't care anyway. You've always been, more or less, indifferent to me. No. You assumed I went AWOL because I'm a "bad seed." I can only guess what you say to my sister about me. "Teri's a thief, she takes advantage of me, asks for money. She's a bad seed . . ."

Perhaps because you and Dad have some good qualities, I pulled myself together after the Army and earned college degrees. Not that you encouraged me. I married a stand-up guy with a good income, but he had sexual issues and so did I because of my abuse. Because of your dear son. So, I ended up without children. Still, I went on and tried to make something of myself until I had another breakdown during a lengthy bitter divorce, but thankfully and ironically, the VA came through. I am not a fake. A fraud. A thief. Or whatever other negative thoughts you have about me. I was born with a condition beyond my control and the childhood traumas and abuse you and your son put me through exacerbated this condition. So did my military experience which is why I receive disability compensation. Despite my psychological disadvantages, I kept trying to do what I could to better myself.

Now you choose to discard me like I'm stinky, unpleasant garbage, because I trouble you in your old age. Because I'm not right. Because you are old and only want pleasant things around you—gambling and "buffet families" who love you and who you can hug. As I already said, I can only guess what your motivations are because we don't talk about anything but what is fun and pleasant, do we mother?

I used to think I came from a long line of "pure-hearted" women—your grandmother Mary Elizabeth, your mother Bertie, you, me, my sister—but now I view pure-heartedness as naive and

narrow-minded self-righteousness. Pure-hearted hypocrisy. You are unable to see beyond what is pleasant. You avoid anything troubling. You make judgements based on what you perceive to be “pure” “good” behavior. I do think you are a good person, with good intentions, a Christian woman who prays, goes to church and sees herself as Godly. But this pure-heartedness turns to coldhearted behavior when you can’t see beyond your own myopic vision of how the world should be. The world, as I have experienced first-hand, is not all rosy and pleasant.

And by the way. I am not a thief. Never have been. Or a liar, or a drug addict, or a murderer, stalker . . . I didn’t steal your precious coffee. That was a preposterous accusation and I am offended by it.

I now think of your gifts, favors, and help throughout the years as poison because you’ve ended up resenting me. Yes, I have asked you for money. And thank-you for helping me out. Many Times. But I *asked*, told you what it was for, and YOU GAVE IT TO ME. Why? You could have said no but you gave it to me then turned on me with resentment and accusations—a bad attitude toward your daughter. I believe you are a two-faced gossip behind my back—to my sister and to your neighbor lady. God only knows what you told Marge. “Be on the lookout for my wayward criminal daughter.” Marge stampeded out of her house when we arrived to check on your place while you were away in PDX. As if we were up to no good. NO, we didn’t go there to steal your things, to vandalize or defile your property. We were looking out for you. But you thought the worst of me. Assumed I had ill intent. I don’t know what’s in your head and heart because you don’t talk to me. Asking you for money was a big mistake on my part. But I didn’t steal it from you or trick you out of it. Shame on you for thinking otherwise!

To say the least, your turning against me, cutting me off, even in your old age, leaves me feeling much of my own resentment and distaste. But I’ve lived a life knowing my mother was

indifferent except for her punishment sessions. Which seems to be what you're up to now. This unravelling of our tenuous relationship has probably been a long-time coming, anyway. I am from a very dysfunctional family with dirty little family secrets you thought you'd take to the grave.

So, I say to you now, if you spot me in the casinos or at the buffets, look away, act as if I'm not there. I don't want to encounter you. I don't want your hugs and I don't want to see your "pure-hearted" smiles of hypocrisy. But I forgive you. Jesus said while he suffered and died on the cross—"Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

I hope you live many more years and enjoy your life of gambling, pinochle, and buffet family hugs.

Postscript written October 30, 2018

I ran into my mother today at the Riverside Buffet. She tried to greet me, but I just pulled away and waved "Hi," leaving her as I walked away.

Later, at the video poker machines where I was playing, Mom came up to me and asked what was wrong. I told her she didn't want anything to do with me when I paid her a visit last month. That she doesn't call anyone anymore. I told her she made me feel worthless, like a person not even a mother can love. She told me she's old and her mind is going, although she seems sharp to me, and that she didn't mean anything. But most of all she said, "I have always loved you and I always will." I believed her. She seemed sincere. Did I misconstrue? Was my mind playing tricks on me. I had felt totally worthless when I believed my own mother found me unworthy to love. But she set our relationship straight. We both are plagued with mental issues, she from old age, me from years of unresolved psychological distress. So, I will send her a card

that says “I love you” and try to make amends. I am emotional now. Because I truly believed my mother didn’t love me but she set the record straight and even apologized for any misunderstanding.



My Mother’s Loving Brother

(I wrote this for Mom shortly after she left BHC for the last time and moved in with my sister. I wanted to send her something special. I included pictures of her and her brother, my uncle Bill. My mom’s relationship with Bill is such a contrast to the one I had with my bullying and indifferent brother. Bill Davies was a forthright, standup, intelligent man, and a veteran of WWII. They don’t make them like him anymore!)

For over 80 years, my uncle Bill Davis was a loving brother to my mother, Marion, his younger sister. During the Depression in the 1930s, Bill and Marion Davies grew up on the Oregon Coast where my granddad made about \$30/month. To help out, my grandmother picked sword ferns for the funeral home, my mother picked huckleberries to sell to the local baker, and Bill had a paper route. From what mother has told me, Bill was an ingenious boy, always inventing things, creating things, such as making a Ferris wheel for the neighborhood kids. Just before WWII broke out, my granddad Brown moved his family to Portland. The family lived on Polk Avenue in north Portland and Granddad Brown taught himself to be a plumber to support his family.

Bill and Marion attended Roosevelt High School in North Portland. During their teen years, they hung out with a group of friends that included Bill’s future wife Hazel and her brother and sister Chuck and Wynona. They did daring things such as drive to Multnomah Falls

at midnight. They were a clique of wholesome 1940's kids having clean fun. During the war, Bill joined the Navy. I'm positive duty called him. After the war, he studied engineering at the University of Portland then he worked as an engineer at RCA. For perhaps 45 years, my uncle Bill and aunt Hazel lived in Seattle. Bill worked at Boeing as an engineer. For health reasons, they never had children. My aunt had MS but she lived into her eighties and enjoyed a long life with a stand-up man who took her sailing on the Puget Sound and flew her to sites in Mexico on a private plane he co-owned. I imagine Bill treated his wife like a queen. At every Thanksgiving, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Christmas, Bill and Hazel came down to PDX for dinner at my grandparents' house. When I was in 6-8th grade, I used to wear my uncle's pea coat from the Navy. It was the style back in the 1960s, along with hip hugging bell bottoms. But my navy-blue pea coat was the real thing, a bit large but "Mod and Cool." It's long gone now.

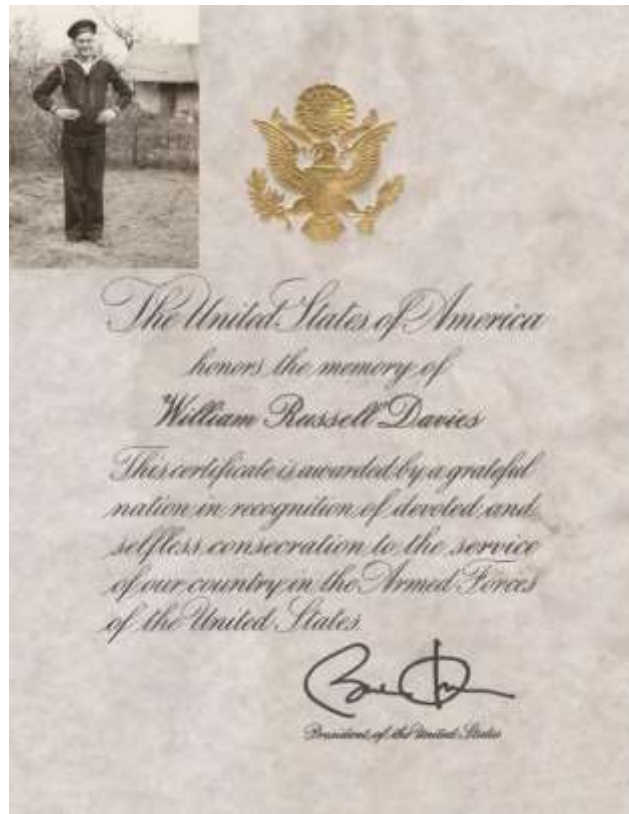
Twelve years ago, my uncle Bill found out he had Brain Cancer. Mom ran to his side in Seattle and stayed with him until he passed. Then she helped settle his estate and sort through the tons of papers and receipts he had kept over the years.

During his life, my uncle amassed a few million dollars. He was wise, intelligent, and enterprising. And generous. He left about 45K to each of his 11 nieces, nephews, and surviving in-laws, to his Alma mater the University of Portland, and he left quite a fortune to my mother. He died of brain cancer at 81. Mom believes his illness stemmed from his presence at Bikini Island during the A Bomb tests. She is probably right.



Mom and Bill as kids. Bill with Mom and Hazel.





A letter President Obama sent to my mother; Bill's closest surviving relative.



My uncle Bill was on a ship watching the A Bomb at Bikini Island