

Law School High
a memoir by Teri Ekland



Chapter One: A Visit to Andrew Jackson High

I'm calling this memoir "Law School High" because for me, in many ways, law school was a re-enactment of my high school years which entailed a lot of adolescent foolishness. Both high school and law school were vexing times in my life.

When I embarked on my law school journey at age 34, I read Scott Turow's *One L* and John Osborn's *The Paper Chase*. My experience was quite different from these two Harvard men. I didn't make law review, clerk for a judge or even end up practicing law but I did earn my Juris Doctor diploma. Like every other law student, I tried to excel during my first semester although I turned out average. High School differed in that I wasn't motivated to do anything except have a few friends. My parents were hands-off and uninspiring in their approach to parenting which I describe throughout this memoir. In contrast, during law school my husband of the time was supportive and continuously bolstered my self-esteem. He pushed me into law school in the first place.

I began law school a year after the Gulf War erupted. When I awoke to the radio announcing that Iraq had invaded Kuwait, I said to my husband, "That's one of my countries!"

Five years earlier I had been teaching English at Kuwait University. The invasion had in fact trapped some of my former colleagues still living in Kuwait City.

During my law school years, Anita Hill was testifying at the Senate Judiciary hearing on the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court. Her claim that Thomas had sexually harassed her enthralled my entire class. When I was a 2L, Clinton defeated the first President Bush and my friends and I were over the moon. Nearly twenty years earlier I graduated from Andrew Jackson High when Congress was holding the Watergate Hearings, the Vietnam War was winding down, the Supreme Court had recently allowed for legal abortion, and the New York World Trade Center had only recently opened.

I grew up in Portland, Oregon (PDX) during the sixties and seventies and moved away permanently in the eighties. Portland's not a bad place to live. It's just that some people, myself included, must leave their hometown simply because it's their hometown. I wrote the following poem several years ago. It expresses my need to leave PDX.

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.”

Despite my urge to get away from my hometown, Portland would be the perfect quaint city if it weren't for the cold drizzle and rain during much of the year. There are beautiful parks along the Willamette and Columbia Rivers, scads of fine restaurants and theatres, and the Pacific beaches and Cascade Mountains are a short drive away. In fact, Mt. Hood looms over the city like a guardian angel.

My hometown is famously known as “The City of Roses.” Each June, for over one hundred years, the city has celebrated the Rose Festival. When I was growing up, at least two parades occurred during the festival. The first to arrive was the Merrykhana, a spoof parade with clowns shooting water guns at the crowds lining the streets and throwing candy and confetti at the kids. Sometimes they even pulled women and children onto the whimsical floats. One year my dad was in this parade on a float for his brother. During the era of Captain Kangaroo, my uncle Jim was known in the city as Rusty Nails the clown. On his kid's TV show, he portrayed himself as Rusty and sometimes as one of his three clown brothers. For his float in the Merrykhana, Jim enlisted my uncles Jack and Dick and my dad to play these brother clowns. Dad dressed as Flathead Nails, a hobo clown. I was beyond thrilled when their float passed by and my dad pulled me onto the float for a short ride.

The more serious parade was the Grand Floral that wound through the streets of downtown. High School bands marched between the many floats that companies and institutions elaborately decorated with roses and flowers. The Grand Float (like the Santa Claus Float of the Pasadena Thanksgiving Parade) featured the Rose Festival Queen on her throne surrounded by

her court of fourteen princesses. Each year the festival's association selected the queen and her court from the Rose Courts at every high school in the city. The pageantry was a big deal in my hometown (and presumably still is) although not so much for me.

After twenty years of being away and living in Arizona, I returned to Portland. The trip wasn't to visit my parents because they spent their winters in Arizona and I saw them often enough. I went to a friend's wedding which she held in a hot air balloon while her guests watched from one of those Willamette River parks. A cool breeze struck me as I watched the wedding balloon pass by overhead and admired the colorful autumn trees at the river's bank. It was a stark contrast from the arid sunshine and sparse desert landscape of Arizona.

I spent my childhood in two houses on opposite sides of the city. On this trip I drove past both. Seeing my earliest home on Boston Street in North PDX was an especially haunting experience because strangers had remodeled the house's exterior and redid the front yard. Essentially, they had resurrected my old home into a new living memory.



After scouting out my second childhood home in the SW foothills, I swung by Andrew Jackson. It was no longer a high school. Nearly ten years after I had graduated in 1973, politicians converted Jackson to a middle-school because they claimed too many high schools existed in the more affluent districts of SW Portland. I parked my rental car and walked around the campus of green hills, tennis courts, and a track and field. Every turn produced a memory. Here, beside the east building, Cindy P had been playing catch when she fell against a window

and cut her face. There, during a class session on the front lawn, Jeff W said he was deathly allergic to bees when one happened upon us. On the grassy hill at the back of the school, I recalled student “sit-ins” to protest the Vietnam War and smoke cigarettes out of sight from the school’s one security guard, a short and husky Filipino named Mr. Apilado.

I was here, I was there, I kept thinking as vortexes from my past appeared to me. I passed through these memories feeling that maybe I had gone too far. That the past is best left buried or kept abstract only to emerge in casual conversation: “Do you remember when?” To thrust myself alone into where I once lived and went to school seems best experienced with a spiritualist or psychologist carefully guiding the way.

I don’t know why I feel like this. Maybe when confronting my childhood, a time filled with trauma, anxiety, and torment, I am helpless to direct the child who was once me. “This way,” I want to tell her. “Be careful little girl. I and I alone know what’s best for you.”



Boston Street in North Portland and Maplecrest Drive in the SW Foothills

1968 was a terrible year in American history. LBJ was drafting young men to die in an unpopular war, depraved men assassinated civil rights icon Martin Luthur King Jr. and presidential candidate Bobby Kennedy. All this made 1968 a year of uncertainty. No one knew, not even a child on the brink of adolescence, what would happen next. This was the year my parents decided to move across the city so that my younger sister and I could attend a high school with a better reputation than those available to us in North Portland. My older brother went to Benson High in downtown Portland but at the time, girls didn’t have the option. Benson was exclusively for bright boys. It offered opportunities in sports and classes in foundry, IBM

mainframes, and whatever technology existed during this era (cathode-ray tubes, technicolor movies, transistor radios, polaroid cameras, and microwave ovens?). My parents also wanted to move because they felt unsavory families were encroaching on the neighborhoods of North Portland. (I wish I could say “Times have changed” but they haven’t! These days people are just as biased, bigoted, and prejudiced against anyone different from them.)

I had just finished eighth grade when we moved into a beautiful ranch style house on Maplecrest Drive. It was a step-up from our humble home on Boston Street and felt like we were moving into an upper-class neighborhood. The new house cost my parents 25K and my dad became depressed because of the move. He had grown up in North Portland and had sentimental attachments to his old stomping grounds. He also felt he was paying an exorbitant price for the house. (Here I can definitely say “Times have changed.” Our house on Maplecrest Drive is now worth \$770,000 dollars!)

During my first month at Jackson High, we hadn’t yet finished making the big move and my maternal grandparents drove me to my new school and picked me up each day. They did the same for my sister at Collins View Elementary. She must have been in the fourth or fifth grade.

The move presented a tremendous change in my life. At Jackson, I was on my own and got away with a lot because no one paid attention to me. From time to time, I smoked in the girls’ bathroom or on “the hill” and once or twice I nipped pens and trinket jewelry from Meier & Frank and Fred Meyer, to be daring, I suppose. Once I drank Bali Hai fruity wine under Oaks Park Roller Skating Rink with my best friends Joanne and Sally Black who were unrelated. That was freshman year. By sophomore year I went to a few parties and twice I went out on actual dates. I made-out with a few boys but stopped short of “going all the way.” The notion that sex was meant for marriage stayed in my mind during the turmoil and moodiness of my teenage

years. I recall a Sex Education class sophomore year when the instructor bluntly asked if we should be having sex and I volunteered to say, “Not until marriage.” Most of the students laughed because they were already sexually active. It was one of the few times I ever spoke out in class.

I wasn’t one of the “in crowd” because I had no ambition to get good grades, compete in sports, or become a cheer leader or a Rose Festival princess. In truth, not many things impressed or inspired me during my high school years. My parents didn’t push me to achieve anything. Perhaps they just didn’t have the time. They both worked: my dad as a meter reader manager at the gas company and my mom in the trustee department at the US Bank. They were undoubtedly too exhausted when they came home each evening. Certainly, Mom was. She had the additional job of preparing the family dinner while Dad, who never helped her as was typical of the times, reclined in his easy chair and read the Oregonian or watched ABC News or game shows like “To Tell the Truth” and “What’s My Line?”. Every Friday evening, for as long as I can remember, Mom and Dad scurried off to their square dance club, the Castle Eighters. When the weekends arrived, they wanted to enjoy their leisure time fishing or hunting on camping trips while their kids played in the great outdoors. I believe they thought they were giving us an ideal childhood by taking us camping. Many times, Mom and Dad said to me, “We just want you to be happy.” The phrase didn’t make me feel loved and in fact, it sounded kind of empty. Would they even care, I probably thought, if I became a “happy hooker” or “happy drug addict” or “criminal?” It seemed more likely they were saying to me, “Just smile and don’t be unpleasant around us.” As a result of their neglect, I stumbled along in high school without much of a foundation for what I was doing or aiming to be.

This wasn't all that went on during my childhood. My older brother continuously bullied me with punches, kicks, and berating remarks until I finally learned to hide from him and disengage. In the sixties and seventies, it was normal for parents to use corporal punishment on their kids. Whenever I misbehaved, as a small child, Mom would make me fetch a forsythia switch from the backyard which she used on my bare bottom. She even made me pull down my pants. Sometimes, when I became upset, she took me to the bathroom and threw water on me to make me stop crying. Maybe I was merely craving my parents' attention or calling out for help regarding my brute of a brother. For whatever reason, I believe that all this early childhood adversity blossomed during my adolescent years in the form of "rebellious" against my parents, to use a popular term of the time.

Fifty years have passed since I graduated from Andrew Jackson High. Occasionally, I receive an email from the reunion committee giving updates on their plans, asking for money, and revealing who has passed away or is missing from the original class roster. My best friend from Jackson, Kathi, is on that committee and she hooked me up with these updates. As I told her, I have no plans to attend the reunion. Why? Number one, I never fly anymore, or travel, and Portland is a long way from Arizona. Two, I am looking into hip and possibly knee replacement surgery which is quite an undertaking. Three, the only person I'd care to see is Kathi and we keep in touch regularly. No. High School isn't a nostalgic sentimental journey for me.

To help write this memoir, I recently dug out my yearbooks from Jackson, amazed that I still have them, and to tell you the truth they are as boring as hell to look through. The comments don't even captivate me:

"Lo Trez: Science was so fun? I think I'll take it all 4 years with Mr. Romans. PU. Yech."

“Teri, you’re a real sweet kid and cute too. Hope you have a real good summer and don’t be too good.”

“To a real sweet girl, it has been fun known you this past year. Lots of fun this summer. Yo.”

“I’m glad I got to know you this year because you’re a really neat person.”

“Trez. If you tell anyone what I talked about I’ll kill you. Hope I see you this summer.”

And from my freshman year best friend Sally, *“You’ll always be my very bestest friend and I know I’ll never forget Oaks Park. I’ll see you most of the summer because you’ll see me so I won’t tell you to have fun. Of course, you’ll have fun with me. Luv ya gobs and always.”* (My friendship with Sally didn’t last beyond freshman year.)

That’s enough sharing of these comments. They’re all about the same and after freshman year I stopped having classmates sign my yearbooks. I didn’t even want to purchase them but Mom made sure that I did. All through high school, as I struggled being an adolescent without parental involvement, I sometimes complained to Mom or maybe I got into trouble and she would say to me *“Teri, these are the best years of your life.”* I think possibly Roosevelt High School was a fun time for Mom, back in the forties, and she couldn’t understand that I wasn’t having the same *“time of my life.”* Whenever she said this to me, I probably plummeted into depression thinking *“If these are my best years, I’d hate to be living through my worst.”*

In addition to the tedious yearbook comments, I also have little interest in viewing the black and white photos of all the sports jocks, the rallies, cheer leaders, assemblies, the dances, proms, and the Rose Courts. I’m more captivated looking through an old photo album of my ancestors from the 1800s. Maybe if I had been a happier adolescent and was more involved with the pomp of high school then I’d feel differently now. I bet a lot of the reunion goers are looking

forward to the event with fond memories of when they were wild and young. “Crazy after all these years” is the theme of this reunion according to the emails. I wish those attending this fiftieth reunion to recapture whatever feeling they hope to find. Maybe I’m simply too Buddhist and my joy comes from living in the moment. But enough, I’m beginning to sound cynical and I really am not. Besides, all was not terrible for me at Jackson. I had some good times and was able to swim through those years and graduate like I managed to do twenty years later at ASU School of Law.

Before closing my introduction, I’d like to note that everything in my memoir isn’t necessarily in chronological order because memories aren’t always that way. They happen more by categories that fall into the chapters I present. One memory may trigger another that happened before or after the first one. Also, I am not writing a well-researched essay about Jackson High or ASU College of Law. This memoir contains my personal viewpoints and interpretations about what I experienced at both schools.

I am including some of the briefs I wrote in law school although they tend to be boring and I might advise the reader to skip over them. But please read about the four adventure novels my law school experience led me to write. They are without a doubt the best thing I accomplished during the grueling three years. The summer after 1L, I drafted “Guardian of the Maya Tree” in Guatemala where I was studying Spanish at an intensive language school. During my summer break after 2L, I traveled in Egypt, studied international law at Tel Aviv University, and penned “Ten Years Past Cairo.” When I was a 3L I interned at the ASU Death Penalty Clinic and helped a Native American death row inmate with his petition for a writ of certiorari to the US Supreme Court. Our meetings inspired me to write “The Man from Sacaton” although I promised him that I wouldn’t reveal his personal story. My fourth law school novel, “And You

Learn How to Kill,” is a crime story and courtroom drama concerning a young woman who spirals out of control, commits murder, and lands on death row. Did I have myself in mind for this?

I hope you’ll find *Law School High* funny, inspiring, and insightful; maybe or maybe not for going to law school but certainly for living a fruitful life despite flooring obstacles and setbacks.

Chapter Two: LSAT Number One in a Harvard Hall

After high school I traveled to Europe (see chapter 17 of this memoir), joined the Army, earned a BS in Anthropology, and as soon as I earned an MA in English, I headed to China to teach at HUST, a university in Wuhan. The director of the HUST English Department hired me because my master’s thesis—The Use of Computer-Assisted Instruction to Teach English—intrigued him. This was 1982 when using computers to teach was a new concept especially in China which had only recently opened up to foreign guests (teachers and professionals) and tourists. After a year in China, I taught for another year at the Prince of Songkhla University in Pattani, Thailand.

The new and exotic surroundings of Asia stirred my imagination. Poems popped into my head as I traveled up and down the Yangtze River and wandered about Hong Kong, Singapore, Beijing, and Bangkok. My first memoir “Moonbeams in Asia” describes my travel adventures and culture shock issues while living and working in the Far East. The following are some of the poems I wrote during this time.

Shanghai’s Winter Scars the Skin (Yangtze River Poem)

How bitter can be winter’s bite
So scolding in its chill.
The harbor caught my wandering sight,
And shook my errant will.

Beneath the boat in Shanghai rests,
Your waters passing life:
Strings of barges – thatched and patched
(my heart is filled with strife).

I cannot count your numbers,
They pass too quick to care,
(and those upon these waters,
are not themselves aware).

Shanghai's winter scars my skin,
And cuts the spirit old.
(If only we could rest a while,
away from all this cold.)

“And who are you – Intruder –
who dares to think of me?
For I'm the soul at Shanghai rests,
One billion memories.”

Forever Waters Must you Scold? (Yangtze River Poem)

I'm not for you –
You're growing old
Forever waters,
Must you scold?

Alone I be upon the river
To watch the body come and go,
And be the gull chasing sterns,
The steamboat is my home.

Upon this boat, I sleep alone,
Inside a room that bunks the mass.
I shower from a Morning River,
Remembering where I've made my home.

I'll be the sun inside the haze,
And penetrate the surface gaze,
Allowing for a dazzled dance –
In cellophane spread.

The River many shadows cast,
There are times I do not know
The mountains or the broken clouds

From my own reflected glow.

Phantoms of the Marshland (Thailand)

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 even grasp you –
You're snatched away from me.

A Walk in Bangkok

Two feet are sore,
From midday's beat
A tropical downtown
Exhausting its heat.

The bus was crammed,
The 'jams were slow,
Where only the chary
Pedestrians go.

Meat markets sweat
Uncongenial smells,
But soon I reach flowers
An old woman sells.

Why do I continue?
I have nothing left to buy
And the street is all an unjust rule
Of chaos passing by.

Still, I stretch on walking
For the possibility,
That something worth my effort,
Waits beyond, in front of me.

From Thailand, I briefly returned to Portland and stayed with my future first husband Don. I soon felt useless working at temporary “Kelly Girl” filing jobs. To remedy this, I ventured to Kuwait University to teach and earn a decent salary. After only a semester, however, I tired of the situation and suggested to Don that we move to the East Coast (I didn’t want to live in PDX). He agreed and found an engineering position at GTE in the Boston area. I returned to Portland and Don and I drove through the northern US and southern Canada to Boston. We stopped at Banff National Park, Moosehead, Saskatchewan, Thunder Bay (where it rained so hard we had to pull over and wait it out), Niagara Falls, and Portland, Maine. We were taking advantage of sightseeing on Don’s travel allotment from GTE.

I loved the high culture of Boston and the beauty of New England especially in the fall. We took trips to see the autumn foliage, often drove to Dover, New Hampshire for a three-lobster dinner at Newick’s Lobster House (obviously before I became a vegan), saw historic sites like the Mayflower replica, Plymouth Rock, monuments to the witches of Salem, and Hawthorne’s “House of the Seven Gables.” Several times we walked around Waldon Pond and the Harvard campus and took trips to Cape Cod and P-Town (Provincetown). While Don and I settled into an apartment in Natick, I found a few teaching positions to keep me busy. I taught English to foreigners at the YMCA in downtown Boston, substituted for a remedial high school class in Waltham, and tutored English one-on-one at a private language school, Language Consultants in Wellesley Hills, to a Swiss engineer, a Japanese businessman, a woman from Israel, and an older man named Yuri from Russia who would tell me all his ailments whenever I asked him how he was doing, instead of saying “I’m fine thank-you. And you?”

I again started feeling undervalued and complained to Don. He suggested I enroll in law school. He thought that with my background in English and global travel, a professional career in

law would nicely suit me. I mulled over the idea and pictured myself becoming a hotshot attorney. Before long, the notion took hold and I studied an LSAT prep-book from Harvard Book Store off Harvard Square in Cambridge. All the while Don kept pumping my ego by saying “I know you can take on this challenge,” “You’ll excel in law school and make law review!”

The Law School Admission Council held the LSAT at Harvard in an enormous but dark and stuffy hall with rows of long, narrow, wooden tables. The voices of jittery students echoed around me as I sat at one of those tables. Everyone in the hall was anxious about the law school admissions test but I doubt anyone felt as nervous and out of place as me. I spoke to no one but listened to everyone else yammer away before the exam. Brag, essentially. A young man at the table in front of me loudly boasted to his neighbors, “Yeah, I’ve already gotten into *Harvard Medical School*. I just want to keep my options open.” In his Polo shirt and khaki Dockers, he looked like a Harvard man. A Kennedy, in fact. Everyone in the room looked like Harvard elites and I felt intimidated and overwhelmingly small. I tried to plow ahead but my test results turned out to be a paltry twenty-four. I must have had the lowest score out of everyone in that Harvard Hall.

A poem I wrote back in the early 80s seems to fit here. While teaching in Wuhan, I often mingled with the expatriated community. A few times I met teachers from Yale who were primarily Ken-dolls that thought highly of themselves. These Yale elitists inspired this “word play” poem. They had made me feel like a hick from Oregon who lived in a log cabin and pined over their Ivy League East Coast wonderfulness.

Conceited by their Flesh

Conceited by their flesh,
Why why why?
They think I’m here
To get them.

They see me here to
Try try try,
In hopes to
Snag or net them.

Embarrassed by myself,
Shy shy shy,
They think I think they think.
Clumsy in their wit,
They think they're such
Twits a twit a twit.

Encouraged by a name
Gamey gamey game.
They watch my words
To catch me,
The snob (obs.) from
Portland,
Not from Maine.

Despite my low LSAT score and with Don's encouragement, I applied to five law schools in the vicinity. Of course, Harvard wasn't even on the table but I applied to Boston University and Boston College. They instantly rejected my applications. Even my personal statement about my virtues, honors, and world travels didn't persuade anyone on the admissions committees except at two law schools in Massachusetts and one in neighboring Vermont.

Don took a day off and we drove north to South Royalton to look over Vermont Law School. We walked around the historic village along the White River but couldn't find the law school until someone outside an antiques shop pointed out, "It's across the street." The school was so quaint it blended in with the town.

It was snowing on the day Don and I drove ninety miles to Springfield to attend my orientation at Western New England University School of Law. Along the way, I thought about my favorite poet Emily Dickenson. Between 1830 and 1886, Emily had lived in Amhurst 22

miles north of Springfield. Her aura struck me as we drove through the snow flurries. Maybe it was her spirit.

My introduction to Emily Dickenson occurred when I was a small child. In the sixties, children didn't have computers, Wi-Fi, smartphones, and TikTok. We had only three TV channels to watch, ABC, NBC, and CBS, and on Saturday mornings we were glued to cartoons. Otherwise, we freely frolicked outside and on rainy days played indoor games such as Parcheesi, Monopoly, Chinese Checkers, and card games like Crazy Eights, Old Maid, Go Fish, and Authors.

First published in Boston during Civil War times, the Authors Card Game was going strong one hundred years later during my childhood. (I doubt it's viable these days when kids are obsessed with their devices and social media sites.) It's played like Go Fish except with a series of American and British writers from the 1800s. When a player has four cards with the same author, he/she has a book. The player with the most books wins. The game was highly educational and I learned about Twain, Alcott, Cooper, Dickens, Longfellow, Poe (who was my mom's favorite author), Shakespeare, Tennyson, Irving, Scott, Stevenson, and Emily Dickenson.

In high school English, junior or senior year, I studied a few of Emily's poems and learned about her life. But it wasn't until my college years that her poetry especially moved me. For my MA in English, I took several courses in American literature. My favorite one covered the transcendental movement of the Boston area in the late 1800s. I admired the writings of Henry David Thoreau (who lived like a Hermit at Walden Pond and wrote about self-reliance), the essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson, and the poetry of Walt Whitman and Emily Dickenson. Transcendentalism more or less aligns with my own worldview. That is, because of my difficult upbringing no doubt, I believe in depending on myself (Thoreau's self-reliance) and adhering to

individualism over group identity. (*Why would I ever identify with a family that caused me such trauma and confusion and made me feel so insignificant and unloved?*) In my worldview, each person must realize his/her own true self instead of accepting what society, family, or religion (group mentality) determines that self to be. "I am who I am and NOT who you say I should be!"

Emily came from a wealthy family of prominence and her father was interested in her education. This hardly happened to me. She had an older brother and younger sister with about the same age differences as mine. Unlike me, however, Emily was close to her siblings. Otherwise, I have many commonalities with the poet from Amhurst. She found her mother aloof, as I've always found mine to be, and she spent much of her later adult years isolated, as have I. Emily was also an avid correspondent, as was I when writing to international pen pals during my thirties and forties.

Another similarity is that Emily became religious for a while then stopped going to church. Twice in my adult life I've become religious then decided I was better off mentally freeing myself from the grasp of religion. Emily was very scholarly and interested in a variety of topics like I am. Above all else, I've written hundreds of poems with similar themes to those of my favorite poet, such as mortality, spirituality, wordplay, and nature. And my poetry, like hers, often rhymes but not in any formal way. Her most creative burst of poetry came in her early thirties, like me (although maybe for me it was when I was 27 or 28).

Here are a few of the short poems I wrote in the 80s while probably thinking about my favorite poet from Amherst.

Frozen Heart

Who froze this little heart?
And locked her in the storage vault,
Where ancient treasures lie,
Waiting to be had.

Don't scald a thawing heart,
It never will survive.
Allow it time to have
Fresh air,
To melt the ice away
(and the frozen heart won't die).

Stubborn Heart

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

Dying Moment

In a dying moment
I looked another way,
To catch a different point on Earth,
But then it slipped away.

A Pure and Simple Sound

A pure and simple sound
To my ear was introduced,
Enrapturing, un-fashioning,
A sound to reproduce.

On that enchanting winter drive to Springfield, I began imagining that maybe I had been Emily Dickinson in a past life. It's not that I'm a strong believer in the theory of reincarnation or, for that matter, in any theory based on conjecture. However, a poem about her popped into my head and suggests my feeling a larger-than-life connection to my favorite poet from Amherst.

How can I conjure up the past,
When the past is what I be?
And this I know through all our rhymes,
Belonged to Emily.

Despite the magic of my visit to WNEU School of Law, I leaned toward attending law school in idyllic Vermont. But then I didn't want to disrupt my life by living several hours away

from Don and visiting him only on weekends. I ended up enrolling at New England School of Law (NESL) in downtown Boston because it was a fairly short drive from our Natick apartment. I later learned that NESL had a reputation for taking the lowest of the low LSAT scores. Nevertheless, I went to the welcome orientation and encountered lots of enthusiasm and professional energy.

Before I even attended my first class in property law, Don announced a change of plans, at least for him. After a year, he was suddenly tired of living in Boston. “Too many traffic hogs,” he complained. “People honk you through intersections. Everything is too expensive. Winters are cold, wet, and snowy.” He took me completely by surprise when he declared that he wanted to live in the Sun Belt and apply for positions at Intel and Motorola.

We were not married at the time but I set everything aside and went with him. I didn’t want my fiancé to leave me dangling behind dumped off in law school. Besides, I dreaded going to law school after my fumbled LSAT at Harvard and the Arizona Sun Belt sounded like a pleasant change from the drizzle and slush of both Boston and Portland.

We drove across the southern states from Boston to Phoenix and stopped in New York City, Washington DC, the Smokey Mountains, Dollywood, New Orleans, and in Ft. Worth for a short visit with Don’s parents. This time our travel expenses were curtesy of Intel where Don landed an engineering position. As for me, I believed my grandiose idea of going to law school remained in Boston and that I’d apply to teach English at Mesa Community College or some language school. But it didn’t turn out that way.