



POETRY
FROM
NANCY'S CLASS

SPONSORED BY
THE ARIZONA
SENIOR ACADEMY

ACADEMY VILLAGE
TUCSON, AZ
2024

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Academy Village Poetry Class: 2024

This booklet of poems is dedicated to the person who brought poetry to Academy Village—both as a poet, and as a teacher of poetry-writing. *Nancy Fitzgerald* moved to Academy Village in 2005 with her husband, Jerry Agnew. She worked hard to persuade the ‘Village Elders’ that poetry classes would be both popular and respected within the village. And, indeed, this was the case.

Over the years, villagers have benefited from Nancy’s remarkable talents as a teacher. Many of her students never contemplated writing a poem; and in fact, had not studied poetry in the past. But as you will see from this small example, Nancy’s Academy Village students learned to both appreciate and write poems such as those found in this booklet.

--Virginia Richardson

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REFRIGERATOR'S LAMENT

They're leaving me again, I can tell.
They paw through my innards, toss away
Out-dated yogurt, moldy raspberries,
Wilted lettuce and dried up cheese.
The garbage bin works overtime, and I spill
The best of my treasures into a big green cooler.
I'm left with only ketchup, mustard,
Olive oil and unopened wine.

They swab me down with Mr. Clean
And talk about their sparkling lake up north,
Their lawns festooned with violets,
Their lilies-of-the-valley perfuming the wood.
My white interior tingles, my stainless-steel skin
Casts a silver glow around the kitchen,
While they brag about their northern birds,
Their robins and blue jays, titmice, catbirds,
Rose breasted grosbeaks and Carolina wrens.
Don't they notice the birds here?

I see plenty of them out the picture window,
Fluttering around the feeders, flashing
Their reds and greens, their yellows and muted browns.
And the desert mountain in the background,
Dappled with moving cloud shadows,
Painted with gray of dawn, gold of sunrise,
And sweet mauve of dusk.
I would not abandon all this for some lake!

But they drive away, car bulging with luggage,
Chaos of barking dog and almost forgotten wallet.
Thank God they've remembered to unplug the ice-maker,
Less work for me when the house grows hot.
But the other appliances - stove, microwave,
Dishwasher, vent fan - all get the whole summer off!
Me, I'm glad I still have a job, humming away,
Keeping the wine and condiments cold.

--Margaret Nesse

SWING LOW

*"You make the clouds your chariot;
You ride on the wings of the wind."*

Psalm

The wings of the wind cluster the clouds
they drift free to billow and shift
A congregation of clouds cast
shadows across the mountains
hover on the slopes. Snow
glistens from their crevices
beauty rides with the wind.

The clouds make a chariot for dreams
visions of flight and release
flashes of what is to come:
to ride on the wings of the wind.

Swing low sweet chariot
come forth to carry me home.

--Nancy Fitzgerald. Feb. 2024

THE OLD AND NEW: Thoughts Coming Together.

Chatting and laughing;
reliving the past,
celebrating the present.
Surfacing recollections
shifting like sand dunes
in the wind.

The new recasts the old.

Baskets of meaningful memories
disappear, and emerge
in the moment, then
set aside to address
another new.

A beautiful dress
with secrets well hidden,
worn once long ago
re-found and worn again.

Old and new in tandem
create unique,
fleeting thoughts,
with conversations
that keep us in love
with life.

--Virginia Richardson

DESSERT

"Desert is spelled with one 's',
dessert is spelled with two.
You can remember this
because you'd never go back for seconds of desert,"
proclaimed our honors English teacher, the ancient Vera Dickie.
Mrs. Dickie's assertion has bubbled up often
during my 30 years in southern Arizona.

Mrs. Dickie, whose imagination could only conjure
the lifeless rock and sand desert of roadrunner and coyote cartoons
or photographs of mirages in the Sahara.
She never knew the lushness of the Sonoran Desert,
with its gentle rains in winter and fierce downpours in summer,
spiny cacti that survive on the water they store for months or even
years,
and tiny animals that get all the water they need
from a morning dew drop
or the moistness in a few seeds.

Mrs. Dickie never climbed to the top of a desert mountain
to marvel at the vastness,
Never saw lifeless sticks on a hillside
leaf out and flower after a rain,
becoming a green and red ocotillo forest.
Never saw a lizard doing pushups
to signal his strength to his rivals.
Or a bevy of baby quail scurrying after their mother.
Never saw a real coyote...
or a real roadrunner.

Don't get me wrong - I love dessert!
But I rarely go back for seconds.

--Dana Desonie. 2024

Dinner for Two

There were two corbys making a mane
One asking the other where shall we gang and dine today.
And now there are two hummingbirds
Asking the same question.

They caw not like ravens
But tick-tick chip to announce
Their arrival in the garden.

There's penstemon, salmon and coral and fuschia and flashy pink
to feast on.
A stalk for each and some left over
For early dinner or mid-afternoon goûter.

But no, they choose the feeder, the one
with the blown-glass confetti globe glittering
in the sun, outshining the penstemon and
the lupine and the carpets of sweet-scented chocolate flower.

There's ample room for both to dine —
It's a table for six, this feeder,
six T-shaped stools on which to perch,
and six place settings — we call them holes —
perfect for inserting needle beaks to sip and sup
on sugary nectar confectioned expressly to delight a discriminating
clientele.

Still, who has ever seen two hummers dine together in harmony?
And, sure enough, there's an aerial battle, mid-air feints and parries,
with beaks for swords, and then ...
the miracle.

The Costa's alights on the stool to the left.
The Anna's across the table on the right.
Can they see each other through the speckled orb, as through
a glass darkly?

I think, then, that there is hope for peace in the Middle East.

—Susan Nisbett

SERENITY

Wearing a white fur coat
swirling like a cloud,
parading her pussy willow tail

she floats into my lap
with gazelle-like grace
and purrs
a comforting lullaby.

Like a cool refreshing breeze
frayed nerves and tension
blow away.

In the gentle whispers
of whiskers
Serenity Returns.

--Char Tosi

ZOOT SUITS AND PARACHUTES

A thousand strong
These women of the air
Left homes, husbands, children and careers
to learn to fly and to serve.

Hair coifed, makeup affixed, they cut a glamorous image through the dust
of the desert where they trained.

Their man-sized flight suite ballooned around them,
leather bomber jackets cinched the billow securely at their waists.
High-rise sherpa lined flight boots and signature white scarves bracketed
their elegantly awkward ensembles
Instead of purses, they carried parachutes of gargantuan dimension,
Their perfume an intoxicating essence of fuel and oil distilled into a
vintage musk
They trained for hours in the air, pored over manuals,
committed critical speeds to memory
and piloted everything the air force had to offer. . .
fighters, bombers, trainers, transports

They towed drones behind their aircraft that were live-ammo target
practice for male combat pilots and gunners
They crisscrossed the country flying middle of the night sorties made
suddenly urgent by a distant loss in the war zone abroad
They white-knuckled their way to their destinations, weather and
treachery be damned

For Two Years-Unbridled passion, singular courage and soul bonds with
each other were their nurture. They were heroes who were undaunted
by any flight they faced

In two short years-They forged a path for women in aviation today

"They soared leaving the glass ceiling thousands of feet below"

Years distant, the echoes of their fire lives on.
For a time, we breath the same air, these woken and I,
A surge of pride erupts—as I sit where they may have sat
It is a privilege to fly in their honor
To pay them tribute

They asked for nothing yet they quietly and steadfastly gave everything.

--Kellie Poulin

TRULY GONE

My mother was dying..
She knew and was at peace with it.
It was her time and she was ready
To shuffle off to wherever death takes us.

When the call came, death and I
raced to be by her side
When she took her last breath.
Death took a shortcut
And I was left bereft
and angry.

My disappointment was somewhat soothed
By the knowledge that five of my seven siblings
Had made it home from every corner of the country
To be with my mother one last time

They had held her close and sang her to her final rest..

The day came to bury her.
My siblings and. I took one last look at that beloved face
And then they closed the lid.

The lid clicked down with the force of a sledgehammer.
The floor shook with the
Force of an earthquake
Birdsong turned to bird shriek
Blue sky dimmed to gray
And then to midnight black.

My life as I knew It was over

I was never going to see her again
Or hear her voice or her laugh
She had slipped beyond the veil
Where I could not reach her/.
My mother was gone. Truly gone/

--Roxy Mitchem-Horn

JUMP ROPE

I was always bad at it,
no sense of timing,
feet plastered to the ground
just as the rope
completed its descent,
then pitching headlong
while my schoolmates tittered.

At recess, though, it was
the designated pastime.
That's why I skulked in line
until our fourth grade teacher,
meaning to be kind,
invited me to spend
my lunch hour in the classroom
with a vintage *World Book*
and a bologna sandwich,

indifferent to the shrieks when
Sharon, who wore Mary Janes
and *never* volunteered in class,
hit on her predestined letter.

--Marilyn Skinner

STREPTOMYCIN

Monday, 7:30 a.m. JAB!
The thumb plunging streptomycin into the upper right buttock.

Tuesday, 7:30 a.m. JAB!
The sharp, stinging stick to the upper left buttock.

Wednesday 7:30 a.m. JAB! Ouch!
The familiar menacing stab to the backside.

Day after day, streptomycin is shoved into muscle to assault
tuberculosis.
Night after night the eighteen-year old sleeps deeply while the
streptomycin labors on the inside.

She naps in the morning after the pointed wake up call of the needle.
She spends the afternoons awake, but under a veil of melancholy,
For all her friends are away at college, getting on with life,

But she is sick with a disease that signals visits from the public health
nurse
always able to report 'appropriate administration of streptomycin to
the patient'.

That streptomycin had the last word, though, and ultimately she rose
up and proceeded with her life.

--Ann Ratcliff

SNOWDROPS

When in March the snow drops
burst from the mossy earth
she would note how elegantly
once again the rhythms of spring emerged.

The violet's pert petite faces
would adorn the front yard among the
dead and decaying oak leaves, the moss,
the greening laurel bushes.

New owners blew off the oak leaves
soaked the yard with weed killer
obliterated the moss
tore out the laurel.

Up on Cedar Hill at her burial site
the oak leaves blow across the monuments.
Snowdrops grace ancient plots
where for centuries her ancestors have rested.

Although the granite spire holds her name
There is no headstone,
no foot stone to mark her passing.
Instead the snow drops grow, their glow
remembering.

--Beverley Davis

THE BEST GUEST

Praise guests who rent cars, remember wine,
arrange bouquets of sunflowers.

Applaud visitors who arise for sunrise,
punch buttons, find mugs and pour,
let me wake to coffee fumes.

Hug friends who shoot saguaros in sunset's
soft light and share the photo.

Bless company who chop onions, mince garlic,
assemble spinach, cheese, sauce, noodle layers,
who prep salads, set tables, mix mules, move
conversations outside under dark sky

to spot star clusters, galaxies and
whisper the names of constellations.

--Leslie Evans

THE BROKEN SHELL

This broken seashell once whole,
Unblemished, unscathed.
Perhaps a home to someone or something;
a safe and sheltered place. Now battered,
scraped, injured; wholeness does not last,
not in this mortal world.

Tumbled, shattered, like broken fine china plates,
their floral patterns disrupted.
Renewed with Kintsugi gold so what was broken
can survive and be even more lovely.

Being human, we are smashed on the rocks
by huge waves tossed upside down
Turning, turning, turning for eons,
Finally, smoothness is achieved.

Is this karma?
Old broken seashells as vessels of light
the same as us, at first.

Looking closely, details can be seen more clearly.
No more youthful faces and polished skin,
rather,
lined and wrinkled faces that tell our stories,
effortlessly.

We are broken and beautiful at the same time.

--Diane Ashton

LEFT BEHIND

Bursting forth my pink white blossom
morphs round hard like marbles green,
blush red swell begins, crisp sweet flesh within
tart sour taste long past, scarlet beauty waiting
waiting, please come claim my delicious delight
I can't hold on much longer—stem dry—red fading
skin shriveling shrinking, to drop deep down in
grass, decay—an apple is meant to be picked
plucked from its branches enjoyed in its prime
Why was I, left behind?

--Marti Heath

DOWN BY THE SEA

The ocean is beautiful compelling,
able to exert awesome power,
domain of capricious Poseidon.

Some days sea and sky
almost blend in a grey mist--
ghostly ships on the horizon
disappearing from view.

Other days bring mesmerizing
sparkling blue water--
sunlight dances
across rolling waves.

Endlessly interesting,
changeable,
harboring secrets of the deep,
mysteries to excite the imagination,

This magnet for adventure
pleasure,
relaxation, discovery.
radiates enticements to dismiss danger.

Land or sea,
so much unknown,
unforeseen,
unexpected--
vigilance suggested!

Useful watch words: respect, appreciation, caution

Endless ebb and flow,
constant rhythmic cadence
of a frothy surf--
a reassuring continuity,

Until it isn't.

--Gayla Curtis

PENS I HAVE KNOWN

My favorite pen is a black BIC velocity ball point.
It has traveled with me through countless pages of my journal
capturing my thoughts, fears, joys, and dreams.

It's more than just a writing instrument.
It's smooth ink glides effortlessly across the page
boldly chasing away dreaded demons

It's a companion on my journey while I write my memoir.
It's a trusted friend that helps me navigate
the ups and downs that occurred in my life.

Presidents used Cross or Sharpie pens.
Kings have used Parker pens.
James Bond used a Montblanc pen, and so did Elvis.

But in the end, it's just a tool,
to be discarded like the pen from
the hotel, the restaurant, the medical office.

--Nina Postaway