

VISIONS: poets

**an anthology of original poems written
at VISIONS at Selis Manor**

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TEACHERS & WRITERS COLLABORATIVE (T&W) partners with New York City schools and community-based organizations to offer dynamic creative writing programs led by professional writers. Since 1967, T&W has worked with more than 750,000 K-12 students and more than 25,000 teachers at schools throughout New York City; published more than 80 books and a magazine (www.teachersandwritersmagazine.org) about creative writing education; and provided free resources for students, teachers, and writers on our website (www.twc.org).

T&W was pleased to partner with VISIONS at Selis Manor to present *VISIONS: poets*, a workshop series in which adults explored classic and contemporary poetry and wrote their own poems in response.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	5
Carmen Becker.....	7
Donna Marie Hedges.....	15
Liz Hernandez.....	17
Donna Madnick.....	21
Meghan Rafferty.....	25
Lyda Schoenfeld.....	31
Janet Seth.....	41
Elsie Mae Smith.....	51
Winston Watson (Ras)	53
Yvonne Whitehurst.....	57
Fortune Cookies.....	61

Introduction

Visions: poets is an anthology of original poems from workshops held in the fall of 2017, at VISIONS at Selis Manor's senior center. VISIONS: Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired is a nonprofit rehabilitation and social service organization in New York. Workshop participants listened to and read classic and contemporary poems from a variety of poetic forms. We wrote original poems inspired by the selections. The workshops were led by Artists-in-Residence Dave Johnson and Virginia Valenzuela.

The poets would like to thank Peter Spagnuolo for recording all our sessions and our CD. We would also like to send a special thanks to the entire staff at VISIONS, especially Liz Lee, Carrie Lewy, Ann DeShazo, and Chris Thompson (for printing all our poems every week in Braille).

We enjoyed every minute! We hope you will enjoy our poems.
Read on!

Dave Johnson & Virginia Valenzuela

Carmen Becker

I Remember

I remember falling out of the swing.
I remember I don't remember two days that I lost.
My grandmother was angry
We had a good dinner that night of
Rice and beans and platanos.
I got healed.
Went to school.
Those are the things I remember right now.

Two Liners

Pass by your best friend,
but don't say hello.

The Swing (And I don't mean jazz)

I remember the swing in the playground
In my neighborhood on East 106th Street in Manhattan.
Burt Lancaster, who later became an actor,
Lived across the street from this playground
In a house with his parents.
He was always in the playground
Doing the most amazing things on
The monkey bars, along with
Tumbling and jumping very high.
Everyone passing the playground
Always stopped to watch him.
Of course my grandmother told me
Not to go to this playground without her.
One day, I was hanging out with my brother and his friends
When they decided to go to the playground.
"Could I go?" I asked. They said no.
"We don't want any girl hanging out with us."
I knew my brother did not want me around his friends
But I was a tomboy and followed them to the playground anyway.
Everything my brother and his friends did I also wanted to do.
I ran and quickly jumped on a swing.
We all were laughing and daring each other to see
Who could swing the highest.
Well, I swung the highest, so high that I

fell out of the swing. My grandmother told me
that I was unconscious for two days.
I still have a small scar on the left side of my face from this incident.
To this day I always wonder,
What happened to the two days I lost in my life?

Before There Was Joy

Before there was joy, there was abandonment
at the young age of eight;
a young child trying to navigate
her way through the world

Before there was joy,
the adult saw the world
with all its flaws. Along
with mine in the mix.

Before there was joy,
there were risks to be taken
to flee the toxic and
negativity from humans,
breaking doors down to
gain a sense of inner
peace. (Freedom?)

Before there was joy,
there was education,
therapy—both physical
and emotional, to gain a
sense of self—I am a survivor.

I Remember Poems

Dinner with Dad

I remember once a week, my dad would visit my brother and me at my Spanish grandmother's apartment, and she would fix dinner with my grandfather looking on from another room. Each time my father made a visit there was never any conversation between my dad and my grandfather. These moments, for me, were always awkward. I felt ignored and wanted my dad all to myself. In my young mind, I began to think, how could I have my dad all to myself? This is how I did it.

I said out loud one of the days my dad visited, "I don't like this food," and my grandmother had this shocked look on her face, because I was always the first one in the

kitchen grabbing food. I started to cry because I made my grandmother feel bad. But my dad, who always wanted to please his princess, told me not to cry. He took me for a walk and we went into a restaurant. I had a great time having my dad all to myself. That's all I wanted, time with my dad without anyone else being around.

In later years I confessed to myself that I had become a manipulator.

Trying to Turn a Tomboy into a Girl

I remember hanging out with my brother and his friends. Wherever my brother went, there I was right behind him.

My grandmother would put a nice starched dress on me and I would return home looking like I was in a garbage dumpster. I heard my grandmother speaking to my dad about how rough I was hanging around with my brother and his friends all the time. So one day my dad asked me if I would like to learn to play the piano. I told him yes without seriously thinking about it.

My grandmother had a friend by the name of Marina Heyliger, who was a piano teacher. I started taking piano lessons, and to my surprise I liked it. I was fascinated with the sounds I could make on the piano. However, Ms. Heyliger had a daughter who always bullied me. She was bigger than me and I was afraid of her. Eventually I pretended that I went to piano lessons and spent the money on candy. Well, my dad soon found out about this and I told him the truth.

He found me another teacher, Harold Thomas from the Manhattan School of Modern Music. I became a star pupil, gave concerts, and later joined the local 802 Musicians' Union. My tomboy days were over and my brother and his friends were very happy not to have me around. But most of all I had become a lady. Thanks to Chopin, Mozart, and Beethoven. My grandmother, I'm sure, breathed a great sigh of relief.

Going to Camp

I remember my grandmother telling my brother and me that we were going to go to camp for the summer. *Will there be a piano there?* I asked. She said she did not know, but probably there was. From the Union Settlement I attended Camp Gaylord White and my brother attended Camp Ellen Marvin, which was across the lake somewhere upstate. My counselor's name was "Smiley" and she basically taught us how to swim. However, you had to swim around a crib at least five times before you were allowed to swim in the lake. But by this time I was thoroughly frustrated because I did not see any piano and refused to swim around the crib. Every day I gave Smiley a hard time by refusing to do anything she asked. One day she was so mad at me, she told me to jump in the lake and I did. I thought I would never surface, but I did and I was crying hysterically. But there was Smiley with open arms to comfort me. When I calmed down, she asked me why I was so disobedient. I told her I missed taking my piano lessons and I might forget how

to play. Within a few days, Smiley took me to an empty cabin and there was a piano. I was allowed certain hours of the day to practice. Smiley had no more problems with me. In fact, I became the best kid in camp.

Snakes in the Night

I remember at camp we wanted to see the boys at Camp Ellen Marvin, which was across the lake. By this time I had become an excellent swimmer along with handling a rowboat.

We decided one night while the counselors went into town to go to row over to Camp Ellen Marvin. Everything was going well, until someone stood up in the boat and it tipped over. There we were, struggling to turn the boat over and get back to shore. When we did, all the counsellors were there waiting for us with their flashlights. We were told that we were going to sleep on the grounds up the hill where there was a snake museum.

“You can’t make us do that!!!! Suppose a snake happens to get out??”

“Too bad!” The head counsellor said. “There are rules and regulations and you disobeyed several of them. You left the younger campers all alone and didn’t think of the consequences.” She was really angry.

The counselors left us to sleep on the grounds. However, there was no sleeping because we were worried that the snakes would escape!!!

Thanksgiving at the Big Round Table

I remember my grandmother getting ready for Thanksgiving. She took me to a live chicken place on 126th and Amsterdam Avenue. You could get any live poultry there and they would kill it, clean it, and chop it up any way you wanted.

Thanksgiving Day was a big family day. All my aunts and uncles, along with my cousins, would come all dressed up in their best clothes.

The night before Thanksgiving, my grandmother would give us our evening meal and after that we were not allowed in the kitchen.

My grandmother would prepare the big turkey and place it in a brown shopping bag. The turkey would be cooked in the oven on a low temperature and remain in the oven all night. We would go to sleep smelling the delicious smells and that night the house would be very warm and cozy.

In the morning on Thanksgiving Day, my grandmother would open the oven, split the shopping bag open and baste the turkey until it was a nice, brown color.

Everyone sat at the big, round table on Thanksgiving and enjoyed a delicious turkey with all the fixings you could think of. This was truly a day to give thanks for family.

Red Dress and Patent Leather Shoes

I remember when I was a little girl I wanted a red dress. My grandfather would not allow my grandmother to buy me a red dress because it was a color that only prostitutes wore. How did he know this, I wondered?

Then later, while I was living in the convent, I wanted a pair of black patent leather shoes. I couldn't have these either because Sister Bernadette said people will see the reflection of my body in the shoes.

Then much, much later I purchased a red coat, which I still have, and a pair of black patent leather shoes, which I had to replace several times.

So now, how do you like them apples?

First Grade Mishap

I remember when I was in school as a child, no one was allowed to go to the bathroom by themselves, so each class had a specific time to go to the bathroom. Classes were interrupted and the class got on line to go to the bathroom. This was fine, until I had to go to the bathroom before it was time. I raised my hand and waved it to get the teacher's attention. She ignored me. I felt my pee running out of me and I ran to the door, but by that time it was too late. My pee was all over the floor. I was embarrassed as hell.

The teacher, Miss Neuman (I'll never forget her name.) proceeded to put me on her desk, removed my wet underwear, and placed a white rag on my ass. Instead of taking me to a room by myself, this was done in front of the whole class—with the whole class laughing. I could not wait until I reached home, crying all the way.

My grandmother asked me what was wrong and I told her what happened. She listened to what I had to say. When I finished talking she told me, "You should have waited." What the hell!!!

This incident caused me many psychological sexual problems as I was growing up into my teens and beyond and I never wanted to remove my clothing in front of anyone.

Beating the Boys

I remember going to Heckscher Park on East 112th Street in Manhattan for sports, especially running track. Eventually I got on a team. A competition was held with the

boys against the girls and I won. I got a medal and I felt great. I had beaten the boys, yeah!!!

However, my brother refused to speak to me because I ran against one of his friends. I never thought about gender in those days and was proud that I had won. The hell with them!

Danny the Homeless Man

I remember this man called Danny. He was always hanging out on a stoop in the neighborhood. He always looked out for the children on the block. When he saw children fighting he would stop the fight and have them make up.

No one knew where Danny came from, but the block always fed him, including my grandmother. The neighborhood saw to it that he had a coat and a blanket for winter.

One evening when Joe Lewis was fighting, my grandmother let Danny come in and listen to the fight on the radio. People saw to it that on Thanksgiving he had something special to eat. Eventually Danny died and the whole block collected money to bury him. Spanish, Black, Italian, Jewish, Chinese—it did not matter what color or culture, the whole block saw to it that Danny, the homeless man, was buried decently. There was great respect for Danny.

Nicknames

Chinky
Baby Carmen (there were five Carmens)
Princess
Little Girl
Speedy
Shorty
Tomboy

Ode to My Piano

There you sit by the window, covered over with a lace cloth to keep the dust away from the shiny, dark, ebony wood. How I long to touch you again but I'm afraid my fingers will not make a sound. Why did I have this stroke? I miss you Chopin, Mozart, Bach, Beethoven, Liszt, and more. I will reach out to you again soon when my fingers are ready to hug you.

My Baby Done Gone
a blues song

I'm feeling so low down
My baby has gone away
Oh what am I gonna do?
I just don't know what to say.

I'm feeling so blue—
Won't look for nobody else
Cause I know he's coming back
To our little love shack.

I will stay true to my baby
Cause I miss his lovin' arms
But when he holds me tight again
He will be gone no more.

Donna Marie Hedges

My Name

My name is Donna Marie Hedges. Each name means something. “Donna” means “lady” in French. When people say, you know, when I tell people my name, they say, “Donna means lady,” and I say, “Yes, I am.” Marie, my mother and her cousin were very close, so she named me after her. And Hedges me, Hedges, you know, the heads. My sisters call me “Donna Reed,” which I honestly have to say, I didn’t know who Donna Reed was, but that’s my name; they call me “Donna Reed.”

And all my friends, they call me “Donna Reed.” I’m not Donna, I’m just Donna Reed. I hate that name, I hate it, but people call me that. Donna Reed. I’m the only one in my family who has a middle name, and I’m very proud of my name. My granddaughter, her name is Olivia Marie, and when she heard my sisters call me “Donna Reed,” she said, “That’s my name!” And I say, no, it’s not. But that’s my name, my nicknames, and I’m very proud of them.

Ode to Jewelry

I love to wear jewelry that’s bright and shiny.
I love all kinds of colors and shapes.
I like yellow, gold, and white.
I thirst for you, like water.
My favorite pieces are bracelets, but any kind will do.

Oh My Children

I wake up in the morning—oh!
These kids are driving me crazy
I wake up in the morning—oh!
These kids are driving me crazy

I cook their food,
I wash the dishes,
I do the laundry
And I even make their beds

I wake up in the morning—oh!
These kids are driving me crazy
I wake up in the morning—oh!
These kids are driving me crazy

I go in my room, I close the door, I lock the door
I got my ice cream

I got the tv on, I even got my B&B—oh!

These kids are driving me crazy!
I wake up in the morning—oh!
Calgon, take me away!

Ice Cream Fortune Cookies

Dig deep. Sex, love, and hope.

Lick up and around. Don't let it drip.

Ode to Olivia Marie

Olivia was born October 15th
my daughter had a hard time with her delivery
she didn't want to have the baby until I got there
so when I got there she said, "Mommy I can't do it."
I said, "Yes you can, you can do this."
At 7:01 pm Olivia was born.
When she was born the nurses asked me
if I wanted to cut the umbilical chord
and I said yes.
After they washed her up and everything,
they gave me Olivia in my arms.
I took her little hand, and she wrapped her hand
around my finger so tight
and she was crying, and I talked to her
and she stopped as if she was listening to me
and she fell asleep.
When you ask her about her name she says,
I was named after my grandma, Donna Marie,
and that was the happiest day of my life.

Liz Hernandez

I Remember Poems

I.

I remember a beautiful June morning
I remember my son
Graduating from preschool
I remember him walking out with his little group
And they're all wearing
Little white caps and gowns.
I remember him coming up to me
With a flower
And handing it to me.
It was a beautiful day
I remember it was a beautiful day
And a joyous day
For me.

II.

I remember Thanksgiving.
It was one of my favorite holidays because we could eat and eat and eat.
My father would roast a big chicken and potatoes and my mother would make yellow rice with chickpeas, and the bean salad. For dessert we had the famous Valencia cake and ice cream. One year we told dad we wanted turkey, stuffing, cranberry sauce, and apple pie. My dad made it, the turkey, and my big sister, Lydia, helped make the stuffing. We got cranberry sauce from a can and the apple pie came in a box from the supermarket.

III.

I remember one bright, beautiful June day
When my four-year-old son
Graduated from preschool.
He was so cute marching and singing
With his classmates.
They wore white caps and gowns
And the teacher gave them each a flower
So they could present them to the mothers.
It was a special moment
And I will always treasure and remember that day.

Buried Secrets

Don't bury your secrets in your mind.
Bury them in your backyard
For there you can dig them up easily
And you can save the cost of a psychiatrist.

New York City

New York City, you have gotten so loud
It's hard to think—it's hard to hear
Hard to stay focused
New York, beep beep, honk honk, ring ring, woop-woop-woop
There is so much going on with cars, trucks, bicycles, and sirens
Women and men are so busy going to work, children going to school,
Every day hurrying off to different places,
So much rushing, so much confusion.
Someone's bound to get caught under the wheels.
New York City, you have gotten so loud
Perhaps that's why people wear headsets and earbuds
To shut you out
They are so engrossed in their little world
They fail to notice any danger around them.
New York City, you have gotten so loud.
What will it take for human beings to awaken
From such a sorry state of inattention?

Got Me Singing the Blues

Got me—got me singing the blues, oh—
Got me—got me singing the blues
'Cause I used to have a man, I used to have a man
Way uptown—oh I used to have a man way uptown
Who gave me money to buy me things
He gave me money to buy things
But best of all (but best of all)
My man gave me sweet loving honey at night
Mm mm, mm mm—got me, got me singing the blues
Ooh—got me, got me singing the blues
Some rotten dirty dog, some rotten dirty dog
Some rotten dirty dog told my man a bunch of lies
He told my man, he told my man
I had roaming eyes—mm mm
But worst of all, he told my man I was planning
I was planning on saying good-bye

Got me—got me singing the blues
Oh got me—got me singing the blues
I'm so lonely—I'm lonely and blue
I'm so lonely—lonely and blue
I don't know what to do—I don't know what to do
'Cause there ain't no other man
There ain't no man in the whole wide world
That can fill my big man's shoes—mm mm
There ain't no man in this whole wide world
that can fill my big man's mighty big shoes
Mm mm, got me—got me singing the blues
Ooh ooh got me—got me singing the blues
Oh, how I wish—how I wish I had someone
How I wish I had someone tonight
That can give me that sweet loving honey tonight
Mm mm, got me—got me singing the blues
Ooh ooh got me—got me singing the blues
Come on, baby—come here, baby
Come here baby—maybe you will do as a substitute
Mm mm—come on, baby, do your thing
Come on, make me sing
Come on baby, do your thing
Mm... you got me—you got me singing the blues.
Oh got me—got me singing the blues.
I'm gonna go uptown—I'm gonna go uptown
I'm gonna go way uptown and find my man
I'm gonna tell him—let's start again
I'm gonna tell him—lets start again with some new plan
Come and take my hand 'cause after all you are my man
'Cause after all you are my man!
Mm mm—I don't wanna sing the blues
I don't wanna sing the blues—yeah!

Ode to Flowers

Flowers, flowers, everywhere, you are so unique; you come in different shapes and sizes, in rainbow colors with many fragrances.

I could find you high in the mountains or down by the river, waterfalls or the sea, even in my garden close to me.

You dance by the moonlight with the stars in the night, and in the morning you bask in the sunshine with the gentle breeze blowing through your pretty leaves.

Flowers, flowers, I wish I were named after one of you; now let me see what name could I be: Iris, Rose, Daisy, or maybe Lily, Jasmine, Violet, Ivy, Dahlia—oh my, it's so hard to choose.

Flowers, flowers, you bring joy to my heart on those special occasions that we celebrate. I feel loved on Valentine's, wanted and needed on Mother's Day, and like the Queen of England for my birthday.

I can always find you at weddings, awards ceremonies, and in funeral homes and grave sites honoring the dead.

Flowers, flowers, you will live forever, for many poets have written about you. "A rose by any other name is still a rose," Gertrude Stein making light of Shakespeare. Artists have depicted various flowers on canvas and in photographs and produced movies with them in the titles ("Lilies of the Field" and "Please Don't Eat the Daisies"); many songs have been sung, like Bobby Vinton's lyrics, "Roses are red, my love, violets are blue. Sugar is sweet, my love, but not as sweet as you."

Flowers, flowers, night has fallen, and I shall dream of you, while I sleep in my bed of roses!

Donna Madnick

I Remember

I remember crazy taxi drivers
On barely paved roads with
Ditches at the side
I remember every house was enclosed
By these big walls
I lived in a big house
And when I looked to the side
I noticed that there was only
One little house,
A one-room house,
In the next yard, and
People were living in that house
Mother, daughter, kids
Animals
They were growing vegetables
With time, I learned
To play, to practice words
It was a different life for them
Than it was for me.
It was a different time
It was a different country
And it was very fascinating.

My 2nd Attempt @ Fortune Cookies

You have been called to use your strengths and resources to assist others in need even though the path ahead has been blocked by the law.

Share your Inner Joy by giving out a genuine smile to at least one person daily.

Water's natural journey can be seen throughout many landscapes. Take time to view the beauty of such a sight. Take note too, of water's destructive forces as she forges over new ground. A change may be needed.

Blaming others is a self-serving strategy that is used to keep focus off one's own misdeeds, remaining blameless. Re-direct your focus.

A man who takes a plane flight to the top of the ladder toward power and wealth, using the funds of those beneath him, will do this, time and time again. He is one of many who need to be dismissed.

Yellow House in Connecticut

I lived in five different houses in this state from the ages of 4 to 6 with my parents and one sister. My youngest sister wasn't born yet. I have memories from every house but the yellow one was the most haunting.

I had my own room but I was keenly aware of a loud, mechanical noise which would go off and on during the night. I was much too busy during the day to notice the booming that occurred only at night. I asked my parents about the noise and they showed me the boiler.

The boiler was HUGE, black, and dusty with a pear-like structure that looked scary.

In the middle of the night I would have nightmares with that same noise heard from the boiler. It would soon sound like some foreboding music. I would be up out of my bed, probably doing something I wasn't supposed to do. Once I heard the music, I knew I would have to get back to my bed before the music stopped or something BAD would happen. Then that need of trying to move fast, only to find myself paralyzed, waiting for the Boiler Man to come and hit me with all the pillows on my bed. These were terrifying moments.

Ode To Do and Don't Rules

Please, thank you, excuse me are the basic words we were taught to say to everyone we met, even as toddlers. Babies are prompted by mothers to use gestures when babies have mastered their ability to make sounds, but forming them into words is still too early to do. As we get older there are a myriad of rules like "Don't put your elbows on the table." Girls were often reminded to "Make sure you wear clean underwear in case you get into an accident." There were countless reminders to wash your hands and brush your teeth. These rules were life-saving to one degree or other. At some point, I would get annoyed at the relentless rundown of all the rules. I began to tune some of them out, at risk of being labeled as a rebel or worse, just plain lazy.

Not only did I pass the dos and don'ts down to my children, but also into my marriage. It became evident to me that my husband also had a whole set of dos and don'ts different than mine. Drying wet bath towels, which way the toilet paper roll goes, and putting groceries on an actual shopping list, including those that are bought every week. I would often forget to write items on the list so...they weren't bought.

Lots of arguments would arise and I soon learned to use humor to lighten the accusatory tone of the "other." I had imaginary shelves in my living room full of the *Paul Madnick Encyclopedia of Do and Don't Rules*. Paul would usually say, "Oh by the way..." Before he finished the line, I would remind him that that particular do and don't rule was already listed in volume 14 and I was running out of room on my imaginary shelves.

Our family grew with two daughters. Paul continued to do the grocery shopping on Fridays, a task he liked to do. I tried my hardest to write needed grocery items on the shopping list. When my youngest was diagnosed with Type I Diabetes, Paul developed obsessive concerns not only about buying food items but WHO and HOW MUCH everyone was eating. It was not possible to make just one meal for dinner but several were made. My youngest was 3 years old at the time. Paul and I were short-order cooks of a sort.

To this day, the rules regarding the shopping list still stand. Paul reminds everyone in the home to put what they need the night before he goes. He has expanded his rules to checking out what one takes out of the fridge/kitchen. This is his new role as the "Food Police" making sure that someone is not eating FOOD that someone else put on the shopping list. He wants everyone to think/plan dinner in their mind early in the day just in case, he needs to pick up an item. Paul tries to get a consensus from the family when deciding to eat out. This is an impossible task, as they have been raised to be independent thinkers. Paul is retired and carries on with his routine. I hope he doesn't venture out to other parts of living. I don't know where to put another shelf.

A Catastrophe Can Be a Point in Time

A catastrophe can be a point in time, where the damage done appears to be irreversible. Sun shining, I was struck by a taxi from across the street, not remembering the impact. Tossed in the air, landing on the taxi, huge bump on head, bone outside leg, landing hospitalized for a month. I started my second year of graduate school confined to a wheelchair for 3 months. Alone, got someone to help, went out to classes two days a week. Healing techniques included a walking cast, a steel leg brace connected to an ugly brown Oxford shoe, surgery with my own bone graft knitting two leg bones together. Started my first career job two weeks after having a FREE leg.

Twenty years later I hoped to change my gait by surgically straightening my leg. A blood clot/infection resulted in three more surgeries.

New routines were needed. Time passed...
One day, a ZEST for life comes unannounced.
Seeing the vibrant colors from the dancing sun, I note
"It could have been worse..."

A catastrophe can be a point in time. Pain starts slow, can be ignored and misdiagnosed. I pulled away from the sight of the METS in World Series, to the ER. With a true pale white face, collapsing, rolling over and over on the floor. With support from Paul, I underwent emergency surgery for an ectopic pregnancy, One fallopian tube burst open, needing 4 pints of blood. Checking the blood supply for traces if raw HIV virus had begun 8 weeks prior to this event.

New routines were needed. Time passed...
One day, a ZEST for life comes unannounced.

Seeing the vibrant colors from the dancing sun, I note
“It could have been worse...”

A catastrophe can be a point in time. Falling down 13 steps, deep gash around right eye, the one with sight. Tingling arms, pins and needles due to minor neck damage. Night with no day requires immediate care. Surgery on eye is six hours to reattach retina, clear away remnants of cataract, scar tissue from incubator damage at birth of seven months. Events did not run smoothly but with many...MD appointments and five added surgeries.

New routines were needed. Time passed...
One day, a ZEST for life comes unannounced.
Seeing the vibrant colors of the dancing sun, I note
“It could have been worse...”

A catastrophe can be a point in time. Cleared from breast cancer for the past six years in celebration. Breast cancer doesn't run in my family. After missing two years, a mammogram showed the cancer. Like the many medical mishaps, too many to recite, I can take the road back to health for granted. Cancer has reappeared after a digital mammogram, measures to treat this condition can be a big event, but can be done in this modern age. Health is not to be taken for granted.

New routines were needed. Time passed...
One day, a ZEST for life comes unannounced.
Seeing the vibrant colors from the dancing sun, I note,
“It could have been worse...”

Meghan Rafferty

I Remember

I remember my first day at religious instructions
Sister Sharon Elizabeth
I don't remember anything after that
I remember watching Elvis Presley at the movie theater
I remember Diana Burns, the maître d'
In the theater
Oh my goodness
I can't remember anything else but that
But at least I tried

I Remember

I remember observing a deep blue sky while walking to church one Sunday morning.

I remember a warm sunny day in May strolling with my mom, when a fire engine rounded the corner. The firemen on the back of the truck turned towards us and tipped their hats and whistled. Mom and I acknowledged their compliment with a polite nod.

I remember I was a redhead during my pre-teen years in Brooklyn when the guys taught me how to shoot craps in the street because they needed to rub my head for luck.

I remember playing stoopball.

I remember pitching pennies in the street, sometimes getting my pennies right on the white drawn chalk line.

I remember the top-spinning contest, each one trying to get their top to spin the longest.

I remember being sixteen waitressing at my grandfather's Bar and Grill.

I remember when I worked as a taxi-cab dispatcher.

I remember playing a dice game at the church bazaar. I shocked the sisters when I took my dice in my hands, blew on them and said, "Treat me right." Sister's gentle smile reminded me that this was a church hall, not a crap table.

I remember my family opening their Bar and Grill once a month for the priests and nuns to have lunch and a little innocent fun. I, too, couldn't resist having a little innocent fun, as well as making a little money from my friends on the side. I stood at the back door of my grandparents' Bar and Grill, charging my friends 25 cents to watch their favorite nun do the bump to a song on the jukebox.

I remember looking out my bedroom window one night as a child and seeing my grandparents standing in the snow below and looking up at me while holding a six-foot Christmas tree. My grandparents' eyes gleamed with delight, seeing my joy and excitement back at them.

Seven Fortune Cookie Sayings

Today's your day to shine.

Setting a goal to live by today will create a future.

A friend will never ask for more than you can give.

The love I give transforms the hearts of others.

A principled person reaps success.

Change hurts, but it often forms a bridge to something better.

A chance meeting often leads to a lifelong friendship.

A mistake made today often leads to a learning experience tomorrow.

Nicknames

Tomato Face

I was born and raised in a black and Hispanic community of Williamsburg, Brooklyn. One afternoon during the summer playing with my friends, I was standing beside a cream-colored Ford vehicle. One of my girlfriends said something to me and I began to blush. They said, "Wow, Meg! Your face is as red as a tomato." Henceforth, I was given the name, "Tomato Face," because anytime someone embarrassed me my face turned red.

Irish

During the 1960s, Bernadette Devlin was a freedom fighter for the IRA. Believing what I was told by my Irish peers, I became a supporter, until I found out differently. For years I had the name "Irish."

Georgy Girl

Mid-sixties a song came out called "Georgy Girl" by The Seekers. I in my pre-teen and early teen years was a tomboy. I got this name because I got all my male cousins' hand-me-downs. Mom and I had no money so this became my nickname.

I'm Moving On

I'm moving on
The wind blew, the snow flew
When you came that day
What was in the air? I say
You blew in like a whirlwind
And drew me in.
Your philosophy, I believed, I thought I was freed
Move on, baby, move on.

You caught me on the rebound
Your words were so profound
Little did I know, I became
Your newfound playground
Like a Stradivarius, you played me
But it no longer phases me
I am moving on

You've led me to believe
I done you wrong, when it was you
All along
Like a shadow on a dime
Your memory will fade in time
You played your game
Your ticket to fame
I'll get over my shame

You played your game
I'm not to blame
I'm not the same
I'm moving on
You played your game
I'm moving on
Clickety clack
I won't look back
The joke's on you
You didn't bring me down

Here, here's my train
Coming 'round
I'm hopping on
bye, bye baby
I've moved on.

My I Remember Story

I remember an unusually cold, overcast day one Wednesday afternoon in early October, when I went to see Sister Sharon Elizabeth, my religious instructor, who was preparing me to make my first holy communion later on that year.

When I reached St. Nicholas Convent, I found myself entranced by the peacefulness of the convent grounds. I walked around back to the courtyard, where I was greeted by the melodious sounds of rustling trees that showered me with their leaves cascading down around me. Sister Sharon, who was expecting me, saw that I was mesmerized by the beauty surrounding me and came to the back door, inviting me in for a cup of cocoa. Sister sat opposite me at a table for two in the foyer. As we sipped our cocoa, Sister Sharon expressed her desire to spend her five-dollar stipend on me, which had been allocated her by the Vatican II Council.

When we left the convent, we headed for the drugstore on Bushwick Avenue, which had a counter where shakes were served. After having our scoop of vanilla ice cream with Hershey's chocolate syrup and whipped cream, Sister still had money left to spend, so we walked down Bushwick Avenue, turning on to Grand Street where two blocks up was John's Bargain Store. She said I would need a hat, gloves, and a scarf since fall now felt like winter. I graciously accepted her generous gift and told no one for fear that envious classmates would cause problems. Deep down inside I knew Sister did this for me, because I was the only one of her students that came from a single parent household with no money to spend and virtually very little food to eat. To this day, I still remember how Sister Sharon Elizabeth made me feel so special.

Ode to Lost Friends and How I Lost Them

My story begins on Friday, the 13th of October, with my subsequent, painful therapy sessions regarding the whys and wherefores of the various losses I experienced throughout my life. My painful losses resulted in a deepening but temporary depression.

Returning home, I lay down grieving over my painful discussion with my therapist. The ticking of the clock across the room quieted my mind. Falling into a deep meditative state, I retreated into my inner sacred space to process my feelings, when I heard an inner voice say, *Nothing costs a friendship more than saying too much or not saying enough.* This inner voice interrupted my punishing thoughts, lifting me out of my depressive state.

My androgynous inner spirit guide, who wishes to remain nameless, reminded me that Silence is the language of god, all else is poor translation. I'm so glad I have a personal inner spirit guide to confide in, so as not to put pressure on my existing friendships when my therapist isn't available.

I'm relating my experiences of desperation, hoping that I prevent you from having the same painful experiences I had. I'm hoping my words of wisdom will be a comfort to you.

As a child, I lacked parental love and affection, so that by the time I reached my pre-teens, my needy personality caused me to gravitate towards people who could give me the attention and acceptance I was starved for. My neediness often placed me in a position to be used and abused. Desperation gives bad advice.

As a teenager, I formed attachments quickly, only to have people push me away. People I thought liked me actually hated me. I was always the kind of person who liked you more than you liked me. I was naive, so they played games with my head. Don't tell your problems to anyone. 20% don't care and the other 80% are glad you have them.

As a young adult, I continued to make many of the same mistakes, setting myself up for more hurt, trying to be all things to all people, instead of being myself. I was legally blind in a blind community and was in my glory. I loved helping people, and they needed my help. Finally, after all these years I felt my needs were being met. When I lost my sight, I lost quite a few of the friends I didn't expect to lose. I was deeply hurt, but I bounced back. I've learned to keep my own counsel.

I didn't understand that I still had a lot to learn about myself. I sought professional help thanks to my partner, who also helped me realize that like some people who look for love in all the wrong places, I, who had no boundaries, looked for approval from all the wrong people.

Never complain, never explain, and resist the temptation to defend myself or make excuses.

As an older woman, I have different friends now. I still help people but not at my expense. I regret the things I've said without thinking, but I regret even more the words I left unspoken. To be fair, some friends passed away, some friends moved away, and still others moved beyond me.

Who comes to me I keep, who goes from me I free.

Nov 7th 2016 a Memorable Day

Nov 7th 2016 a memorable day

I cried the day I lost my beloved President, Barack Obama.

You always knew what to say, when to say it, who to say it to, how to say it.

Barack, we need you now more than ever.

Nov 7th 2016 a memorable day

You united us in a way no President before my time could.

Your warm demeanor and uplifting spirit always ruled the platform you spoke from.

We hung on your every word because you spoke the truth, which is why we loved you so.

Nov 7th 2016 a memorable day

You were never involved in any scandal during your presidency or your political career.

You kept your family and our country together.

We, your extended family, will sing your praises to generations to come.

Nov 7th 2016 a memorable day

Barack, you built up what another has tried to tear down.

Though you are no longer in office, you continue to care for your beloved country.

I will never forget you, my beloved President, Barack Obama.

Nov 7th 2016, a Not So Memorable Day

Nov 7th 2016, a not so memorable day.

You gained the Oval Office with your deception.

You TRIED ("tried" being the operative word) to separate us with your lies and 1950s' KLAN style of racism, but we were too smart for you, TRUMP.

The only thing you really care about is your golf courses, your golfball brain!

Nov 7th 2016, a not so memorable day.

I am appalled by your insensitivity to our fallen heroes and their families.

Your lack of respect for your daughter, telling the world that she had a nice piece of ass, was disgusting.

You showed disdain for women regarding your decisions on their health care.

Nov 7th 2016, a not so memorable day.

I stand now with the HURRICANE VICTIMS of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, whom you left to fend for themselves. No water, no food, no adequate medical supplies. That idiotic three-star general you put in charge of distribution didn't know his ass from his elbow.

Trump, take heart, for the people you left to die will never forget that you refused to take responsibility for your own actions.

Nov 7th 2016, a not so memorable day.

I'm ashamed of you, you poor excuse for a President.

You want to build walls, I want to build bridges.

How sad for you, Trump, for your descendants will reap the rewards of your misguided, insensitive presidential decisions.

Lyda Schoenfeld

I Remember

I can remember going to my singing teacher's house
And having my singing lesson
And singing selections from Handel's "Messiah"
And going into the next room with
Her son, who was a good friend of mine,
And we would compose
Rock songs
With myself on the piano
And him on the electric guitar, and
I felt like I had a double musical personality
And it was lots of fun.
And I can remember
Christmas Eve in church, singing
"Silent Night"
Without the organ accompaniment
And having, holding the candle
And even though I couldn't see the candle
I could smell it
And I could feel it
Hot in my hand
And I could hear everybody singing
With such feeling
That immortal song
"Silent Night"
And I can also remember
Going to the tree lot
For the Christmas tree
And my father and I
Either taking the car
If the lot was too far away
Or coming, walking to the lot
And carrying the Christmas tree home
And singing the carols as we went along.

Lady of the Lake

Lady of the Lake
Why must you go?
You haven't seen it
But you know what it means
To be alive
To be alone
To count to five
To turn to stone.
You know what it means
Why must you go?
You say there are dreams
But all they can show you are edges
Seams of spotted arm holes
And fringes of crystal ball cream
Your eyes cast a shadow
Then melt away
And all that remains is
Your pillar of tears.
No leaning now
No looking back
The lake just spilled on the railroad track.
You still can't see it
But you know what it means
To die.
To sleep
You say why
You weep
Why must you hang up
Your cross and your crown
And smash up your hope?
Why must you lay the crimson coat down
Kill the lamb with a rope
And bury his gown?
You don't need to see it
You know what it means
To shit bricks
To pull thorns
To turn tricks
To wear horns
You sigh and mourn for your
Molten lead
Your beads of pain
Your hairspray awaits you
Though it won't hold your head
And it calls down the rain.

I can't scorn you
You know what it means
So go down the world
And lace up your mind
Follow your tears
But leave one skein behind
So the lake won't desert
So the shade can be drawn
Blow me a yawn
To forget what it means.

Two Liner

Just as the sun has risen today,
you will be a rising star tonight.

My Musical Mix

I was a teenager during the turbulent sixties,
Fortunate enough to know and taking singing lessons from Janet,
A loving, talented woman with an odd combination of
Conventional opinions and progressive ideas.
Such a teenaged challenge, sorting out
Where my life was going as I was figuring out
Which track her responses and reactions would take at any given time.
Vividly I remember pouring my heart and soul into my
Vocal pieces under her direction, especially soprano selections from
Handel's "Messiah," then running into the next room to find her son and
joyfully announce, "Lesson's over, Dave, let's go!"
Then I would run back to sit at the piano Janet had just finished playing for my lesson
And Dave would bring his electric guitar and set up the tape recorder
So we could compose rock songs.
We optimistically named ourselves "The Pros."
We weren't very good, but did we have a blast!
We were close friends who worked well together.
I almost thought of him as a half-brother because
His mother thought of me as the daughter she never had.
Poor dear Janet, it was so hard for her to understand that
Opposites like Classical and Rock could become like
Two sides of the same musical coin, and I was a musical millionaire.
I could never force myself to choose musically between
Traditional/classical and free-reeling rock, as Janet would have preferred for me
So I still have the best of both inside me.
Growing older and looking back, I have come to understand that
My musical experiences have paralleled those

Difficult and wonderful, crazy, mixed-up sixties.
The old establishment having to exist side by side with
The new order of things
Resistant barriers being
Confronted and broken down
New thoughts and ideas
Turning into open doors for taking chances and making changes—
Such a time.

My Easter Birthday

I felt divine fortune smile on me when Easter came on my sixteenth birthday. It was an extra blessing for me to be singing in the church choir celebrating in heart and mind and soul, another year of life, alone with Christ's victory over death. And then, standing at the church entrance afterwards to be showered with "Happy Birthday" and Easter greetings. The day was more than twice as special.

Christmas Violin

My father was an amateur musician on violin and piano. For several Christmases, until the violin could no longer play, we had a duet with the beloved carol, "Silent Night," with my father on the violin and me on the piano and voice. With the violin silenced, we continued our Christmas tradition with my piano and our two reverent voices. I still play this memory in my head every Christmas Eve.

Student and Teacher

Starting in fourth grade, I attended our church school as the only blind student there. I ache to remember how insecure and terrified and so easily frightened I was, especially since my teacher seemed dreadfully imposing. She was very good but extremely strict. I called her a monster, until I discovered she had a pet parakeet. I started to form a bond with her since I had my chihuahua named "Impy," and I was sure anyone who cared for an animal couldn't be so awful. I felt lots better about her after that.

Singing and Crying

Shortly before I graduated from college, I gave a farewell concert there with my guitar, a dulcimer, as well as accompanying my singing on the piano. When I came to my finale and started singing the traditional Scottish folk song, "Wild Mountain Time," I found myself singing and crying altogether, throughout the song. Music flows through the blood that gives me life. Never have I felt or expressed so much powerful emotion that way since then.

Little One at Sunday School

When I was three or four years old, the best part about participating in Sunday school was hearing my Aunt Arlene play piano so we could sing our hymns and songs. I remember feeling so proud to be her niece and godchild. She understood my blindness because she was disabled with a deformed arm. Oh, I thrilled to hear her play piano so excellently well. I can still conjure up the sound of her playing and us children singing the song with the line, "Sunday school is over for another day." She went on to give my first piano and voice lessons. Our love of music and living with disability truly connected us for life. Though she has passed on to her reward, she remains my beloved inspiration.

My Pretzel Dog

A weekly reader I had in college had a puppy living in her basement. One cold night, my guide dog "Esky" and I went to her house for a reading session. There, Esky curled herself into a pretzel around the puppy to warm him. I had such pleasure feeling that furry pretzel with puppy paws and head and tail sticking out. So sorry I had to un-pretzel and separate this doggy duet, but it was time to leave and end the day. I am convinced that if Esky hadn't been a guide dog, she would have become a wonderful mother.

Unquiet Grave

One of my academic experiences was to assist a professor teaching a course on the folk ballad. One day, he was lamenting that he didn't have a recording of the supernatural ballad known as "The Unquiet Grave." The version he wanted was sung by Jean Ritchie, an Appalachian folk singer. Total blindness made me have to memorize where songs were located on my records. How fortunate for me to be able to urge him to look at the first song on side one of the record he had, knowing he would find "The Unquiet Grave." He didn't know the song he had been wanting was right there all the time. Once again, I proved that seeing wasn't everything.

About Rudolph and Me

I always had a special place in my heart for Rudolph, the red-nosed reindeer, which I expressed by wearing out my grandmother's record of the song. At age five, I understood that he was differently abled, just like me. His shiny nose was scorned and misunderstood till it became an asset to Santa one foggy Christmas Eve, just as my non-visual identity is not always properly understood. Rudolph and I were eventually accepted and appreciated for our differences.

Betsy Ross

I was nine years old in 1959. That fall I had the honor of going on the road with the Broadway production of *The Miracle Worker* to play a small role as a child at the Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown, Massachusetts. The first road performances were in Philadelphia. All the child actors, sighted and blind, were treated to a tour of the house Betsy Ross had lived in. I remember touching a pewter plate there, exclaiming over the fact that I touched the same plate that Betsy Ross had used. Even as an intuitive child so enraptured by the enduring significance and collective power of history and its symbols, I was so taken in amazement then, as I am now, to understand and appreciate time and life in this way.

Universal Soldier

The first Earth Day was celebrated in April of 1970. I was ending my sophomore year in college, very much excited by this new celebration, especially since I was asked to perform a song for the occasion. I sang the protest song, "Universal Soldier" to my guitar accompaniment. This song points the finger at the ravages and consequences of war on the people who participate in it and perpetuate it. This was my first experience in such an event, and turned out to be the first of many performances connected with all sorts of protest. Thus began my political life.

My Fortune Cookies

Sorrow gives grief a foothold.

Happiness is a do-it-yourself job, so make it your work for life.

Chat with the cat in your soul, and save the conversation pieces to make a whole movie.

It's so wonderful how older people can live by experience rather than experiment.

If you talk to the trees they will whisper you an answer.

One knows this, and another knows that, and the third knows why. All three can shape the whole ball of wax for the journey down the road.

Helpful secrets are for learning, treasuring, and safe keeping as knowledge to bring and share along life's way.

My Nickname Journey

My official legal name is Lyn Suzan Schoenfeld, and I hate it. Not the Schoenfeld part. That's a strong, no-nonsense name I use when I need to take myself to task about

something and urge myself on to better things. It's the Lyn Suzan I can't stand. It's so plain and ordinary—definitely isn't me.

My father started me on nicknames with "Lyn Scoozie," corny but cute. My best friend's father used to call me "Suzy Q." That was my best one because I could identify with a song with that name, both as title and the refrain. Singing along with the radio, I felt I was singing for myself.

My worst experience along this line came from a dear family friend who always called me "Lynnie Sue." Her name was Elizabeth, but everybody called her "Bobby." The last straw was when Aunt Bobby's grandchildren started calling me "Lynnie Sue." I put a stop to that once and for all. I refused to be stuck with that ridiculous name down through the generations.

In adulthood, I gave myself the social name, Lyda, inspired by a news reporter by that name with a different spelling. As far as I know, my version of the name is the only one spelled with a "y." That's my connection with my legal name, "Lyn."

And believe it or not, I also gave myself a nickname: "Lyda Rose," which I use every once in a while. That variation came from a song with that title in a Broadway show. Three cheers for anyone who knows the name of the show. It was made into a movie.

So, what's in a name, even a nickname? Any number of things, I say.

Ode to Chocolate

Oh, sweet and luscious chocolate, I sing your praises loud and long. My immediate inspiration near at hand, the surprise peanut butter cup I discovered hiding under my writing table when I tried to look for the rough draft page of this very ode I lost and found later with assisted searching. In bad times, such longed for comfort food, you cheer the body, revive the soul. In good times, you prove a festive treat when celebration is the order of the day, for taking in your many pleasures. Bittersweet, dark, or lighter, smoother milk—so many different shapes and kinds and sizes. Bars or squares, big and small, little round M&M's, peanut and plain, mixtures with marshmallow, caramel, wafers, or cream, assorted nuts—what a quintessential candy world you build. Variety and contrast, your second names, whether in a cup of hot, savory cocoa, or a bowl of ice cream so cold it takes my breath away. You are all one and only chocolate, as grand as the accolades you so richly deserve.

So, peanut butter cup now in hand, I pledge to appreciate you, for eating and drinking, as long as life allows you to enrich my days.

Ode to Loving

Loving demands an investment, a movement of the heart, action that transforms lovers so drawn together. They give more than generously, receive with openness and gladness for one another, stretching themselves and each other to the limits of their knowing and loving. Loving changes them and urges them on to grow and deepen and strengthen in character. The tide of love pulls strong. The action of loving unreservedly takes the lovers way beyond themselves to reach a clearer, loving knowledge of each other. As I find ways to uphold and cherish my beloved, I praise my acts of loving for evolving me to better living, loving, and being loved.

Down the Cellar Stairs

When I went down the cellar stairs
An inviting purring sound caught at my child's ears.
My father told me and showed me it came from
the oil burner keeping us warm.

When I went down the stairs
I heard again that friendly purring sound
drawing me to stretch my arms and rest my head
on the burner's smooth, massive, comforting front.

When I went down the cellar stairs
I kept thinking how our oil burner kept those frozen nights
entirely at bay until spring warmth came and conquered.

When I went down the cellar stairs
I was excited to know each time the oil man was coming,
so I could look forward to more nights of laughing
the cold away for a warm, grateful sleep.

Emotional Ocean Blues

My emotional ocean's got me
Really swamped me from behind
My emotional ocean's got me
Really swamped me from behind
Can't tell if I'm coming or going
I think I nearly lost my mind
Thoughts keep swirling around my head
Waves of pain have brought me down
Thoughts keep swirling around my head
Waves of pain have brought me down
It's all bound to run me ragged

I just might go right under and drown
Butterflies are shaking out my insides
My heart beats like an overactive drum
Butterflies are shaking out my insides
My heart beats like an overactive drum
I got so much on my plate now
God knows when my break's gonna come
If my mind could think more clearly
I know I could see a brighter day
If my mind could think more clearly
I know I could see a brighter day
If I could just once catch that break
I'd well be on my merry way.

Janet Seth

I Remember Poems

1. Picnic Sticks

I remember sticks
cut from green tree branches
by my father's pocket knife
the girth of a child's finger
sharpened and pared to a point
we skewered hot dogs to roast over the fire
one end charred or ashes while the other was cold
after eating out chips and hot dogs
and drinking our punch
we put marshmallows onto a stick
and tried to roast them to a perfect brown crust
with a gooey center
what trauma if they burst into flame
or slipped off the stick into the fire.

2.

I remember cool evening walks
with my college roommate
for ice cream sundaes
caramel and apple topping
on maple walnut ice cream.

3.

I remember my first subway ride in New York City.
I arrived on Sunday September 8, 1974.
I took a shuttle from the airport
arrived at the Belmont Plaza Hotel
on Forty-Ninth and Lexington.
I went out and walked around
found the subway at Fifty-First and Lex.
I discovered that Uptown and Downtown
had separate entrances.
I descended the many stairs and bought tokens
thirty-five cents each
then I returned to my room.
I made a long entry in my journal about my impressions

and my new life
then I wrote to my parents.
I had thoughtfully bought a box of stationary.
The next morning I carefully dressed
went to breakfast
tried my luck on the train.
It was noisy, crowded, covered with graffiti.
I took the 6 to 125th Street
crossed the platform for the express, 4 or 5.
My trip finished a few minutes later
at 149th Street and the Grand Concourse.
I spent over two years commuting up Lexington Ave
to the Bronx border.

4.

I remember Kenny Thomas, my mother's cousin
who lived in Burley, singing at the top of his lungs
in his car.
I rode with him and his wife, Phyllis.
The song was on the radio, "Wolverton Mountain" and Clifton Clowers. I must have
been eleven.
Suddenly I remember "Wolverton Mountain" and Kenny singing
in his white straw cowboy hat!

5.

I remember waiting for my daughter, Kiran,
at her gymnastics class.
I did needlepoint.
It was bargello, a flame-shaped design
in shades of lavender to purple
pink to red
and light blue green to turquoise.
It was a seat cover for my grandfather's
old rocking chair.

6.

I remember the black horsehair sofa covers
in my father's parents' house.
They had a pump organ
all the grandkids running through
madly pedaled and pulled on the knobs to set stops.

It was always overfull of people there
a couple of big photos of grim-faced grandmas.

7. Visit to Karen

I remember Tijuana huaraches
and San Diego vistas
blue sky, blue sea, and city skyline
staying with Karen at her
Normandy Apartment.
Drinking pitchers of Margaritas
waiting for our table at El Cholas.
San Pedro seals sunning on
bright yellow harbor buoys
seen from the deck of the Catalina Ferry.
La Brea Tar Pit, cracks oozing
stinking, sticky goo.
Bird singing from a blooming thorn bush.
Actual pools of asphalt.
A museum of ice age fossils
mammoths, mastodons, and saber-tooth tigers
bones stained amber by the tar
think of all the things stuck in the gluey pits.
Memories of Los Angeles visit to Karen in 1978 after
taking Amtrak from New York City.

8.

I remember bears
bears scavenging through garbage
grizzlies fishing or eating berries and honey
an idiot man feeding a bear beside the road
in Yellowstone; he'd already lost an arm to a bear.
I lived near both Bear River and Cub River
Bear Lake was over the mountain.
I lived in Cache Valley where trappers cached furs.
Now we live near Bear Mountain
where New Jersey and New York babies climb trees
and invade housing developments.

9.

I remember going to Foss Drugstore
in Preston on State Street.

They had an old-fashioned soda fountain
with a counter and backed stools
they served sandwiches and sodas
Ironport, or Coke with lemon or lime slice or cherry syrup.
I think they also had ice cream and malts.
You could get prescriptions
or health care items
of course they had beauty supplies.

10.

I remember the first mouse I ever saw in my apartment.
My brother with his wife and two young sons
was visiting us.
Kiran was about four months old and trying to
get up on her knees to crawl.
I saw this little gray mouse come tearing
around the corner from the kitchen.
I screamed and it turned around,
ran back the way it had come.
The shock took years off my life.

Two Liner

Check your phone three times
before you cross the street.

Names

My husband was named for a king, Ashoka
His mother was Tara Rani
The star queen.
Our daughter is Kiran
Light rays reflecting from rippling water
Light from the sun or
Light from the moon
His niece is Puja, a prayer.
When she was two they shaved her head
So her hair would grow thicker.
Romantic foreign names.

Finding Fortune in a Cookie

You will cross a large body of water.
Waste water leaks from the dumpster to the gutter.

You will travel slowly, leisurely to your destination.
Between bike lanes and bus lanes there is one travel lane.

You will be awakened by a crowing cock
From the next block at dawn.

The lights blink off then on
You will reset all your clocks.

Your new iPhone costs \$1000.
It falls to the floor and the screen breaks.

Wear white clothes.
You will spill your tomato sauce.

The Ode Bodes

The ode bodes well
The ode bodes ill
That ode will climb the hill
Words trip happily from my tongue
Tapping toes in rhythm runs
Til the tyrant toad cries, "Done."

The crying ode bows and removes his mask
To show the smiling, singing mask
White face stage masks
Wide empty mouths smile, or frown
Eye slits tilt up or down
Project the story to last top row
To the very end, time to go.

Leaf Peepers

A month into fall
Warm temperatures keep foliage green
The peak is approaching.
We will drive north
across the George Washington Bridge
Up the Palisades Parkway

The road design, antique
Low bridge arches
A road of curves and hills
Speed limit fifty-five.
Trees dressed in vivid yellow
Pumpkin orange or scarlet sin.
Red vines draped across tree tops
Dead brown leaves in mounds on the ground.
Some evergreens
among deciduous trees.
Patches of weathered gray stone
Soil creeping over the edges.
There is a slower loop
Around Seven Lakes Drive.
That's where the motorcycles hang out,
Only two lanes wide
More twisty turns.
Put the windows down and listen for
Birds and breeze.
Road shadowed by hills.
There are small lakes
Sapphire jewels
Where you can walk or picnic.
The peak time for leaf peeping.

Hurricanes and Harveys

Hurricane Harvey squatted on Houston
It rained and rained and rained
Winds dissipated some
Storm paused to breathe
Evaporated brown water from the flood
Then dumped more rain.
Governor Abbott said evacuate
But the mayor said, "Why Bother?"
Neighbors coming to help
Cajun Navy, private boat owners
Plucking survivors from the flood.
A brutal season in the Caribbean and Gulf
Harvey, Irma, Jose, Maria, and Nate,
Left death and destruction in their wake.

Day-old gossip
Harvey Weinstein, producer at Miramax,
Was outed for assaulting, finding, raping
Young stars and models.

He used his company to allay girls' fears.
Asked them to let him give a massage
Or perhaps watch his fat flab in the shower.
No one knew about him;
Everyone knew.
Serial abuse that no one could stop.
Now his face is in the *Times* and *New Yorker*.
Young women made to feel guilty and powerless,
Now scream for his blood and revenge.
He tore through their lives like Hurricane Harvey.
He is hiding in sexual rehab in California.
Perhaps he not dare return or show his face.

Sunday Planes Fly Low

Sunday planes fly low
Sunday planes fly slow
Seem to touch the roof above my head
Sometimes wake me from my bed.

Sunday planes fly low
Sunday planes fly slow
Follow L.I.E. way
To runway by the bay.

Sunday planes fly low
Sunday planes fly slow
Join atonal traffic sounds
To assault ears on the ground.

Sunday planes fly low
Sunday planes fly slow
They rarely show their face.
But I can always tell their place.

Why do these planes appear on Sunday
For the low, slow joy ride?

Have Faith and Believe

I first came to Selis Manor in 2007.
They were talking of a big renovation
Separate entrance and elevator for those coming to class
Upgrades of offices and living spaces.
They talked, I thought, "Never happen."
Have faith and believe.

In 2012 they took two-thirds of the class space
Closed the basement with bowling lanes, weight room,
Class rooms, and laundry room.
Covered the facade with scaffolding.
Should be done in six months.
Have faith and believe.

Next year the basement will be finished
They will start working on the main floor
Fix the elevators
Add the shaft to the basement.
Have faith and believe.

They started apartment upgrades
People put their things into storage and moved.
Top floors were done first
Some people from lower floors moved to finished space.
Have faith and believe.

Fine dust flew
Jackhammers rat-tat-tatted
Heavy plastic, blocked walls
Areas were walled off, including bathrooms.
Gird your loins.
Have faith and believe.
There appears to be a spot for the basement elevator.
The bathrooms are open.
White paint and new lights make it delight bright.
The biggest miracle
A few weeks ago they took down the scaffolding.
Have faith and believe.

They may actually finish the job.
Have faith.

Cold in My Bones

Days get short
Clouds obscure
Sun does deign a visit.
Rain patters all day.
Temperature's sixty.
Winter comes
Cold in my bones
Cold in the bones.

Bones say temperature is twenty.
Get the heavy jackets
Put the quilts on the beds
Order logs for the fireplace
Turn the furnace to 75
Cold in the bones
Cold in the bones.

Keep the oven running
Bake bread for 90 minutes
Bake cakes or muffins
Cook soup
All that cooking will warm the kitchen.
Fight cold in the bones
Fight cold in the bones

Never leave the house.
If all fails to warm my bones
Consider a move to Florida,
Fighting alligators and snakes
But no cold in my bones
No cold in the bones.

Tenth Day

Tenth day
Tenth month
Seventieth year
Old man time just shuffles along
Cryin' crippled knees.
Oh keep shufflin'
Feet can't bend
Shuffle to the end.
Cold wind blows clouds around
Howlin' wind muffles cryin' sound

Drives tears from my eyes.
Keeps me standing on old feet.
Cruel old man time, I sigh;
We'll never meet.
He'll have me slipper shufflin'
'til my final fall.
Fall from pain
Can't rise again.
Fall from misery
Fall into that dark, dark ground
Waiting to wrap me in cold all 'round,
Said, waiting to wrap me in cold all 'round.

Elsie Mae Smith

A Smile

Hi, sun.
You are brightly shining.
How you make my day so
So lovely.
I like the way the day shines.
A smiling face comes from you
And brightens my day.
A smiling face,
I love to smile.

Winston Watson (Ras)

Cutie, Cutie

What a girl look nice
What a sweet sexy ship on her sides
Nothing but traffic about her
Hi, sexy cute, can I have what I'm looking at?
Oh sure. I'm coming at you with full force and great effect
so get set, and don't get wet yet
Cutie, cutie, I do like your beauty, truly
Cutie, cutie, I do like your beauty, truly
I do like your sexy physique
Because it is so authentic
Whenever you walk along the street
It sounds like music
So I have to rock to your beat
snap my finger and move my feet
because you're neat and sweet, *sweet!*

Cutie, cutie, I do like your beauty, truly
Cutie, cutie, I do like your beauty, truly
I am so fascinated by your elegance, see
and it is a part of my policy
to embrace your true qualities with morality and clarity
I am not the fox who looks down at the grape
and curse it and call it sour
I am a man who is like the elephant
who picks the rose from the garden
and bring it to your apartment in a dignified manner
where everything is hopeful and proper
that's why I give you all the honor
go down on my knees and say my prayer
Oh my dear Mama and Papa
Please bless us together
so we can pass one to another
so that the seed that we sow
can bring our sons and daughters honor.

Cutie, cutie, I do like your beauty, truly
You're my first choice
you're so splendid and bright
my sweet banana nose
I'd love to give you all my truths, muah!
I don't care what it took
as long as you're willing to read my cook book

it's just for you to take a look
for your own benefit.
Cutie, cutie, ayaya.

Sardine

I remember
That water and dirt house
That I born and raised in
Water and dirt
Mixed with
Cow dung
Wire
And concrete
Nothing made up of
That house
That I born and raised in
I remember
It was a dirt floor
With some cardboard
Pretty looking paper in it
I remember
The lamp that we used
To get light.
The shade on it marked
"Home sweet home"
I remember
The bed that we slept on
Was a panel bed
With the head and the
Bottom part which you call
The foot—
We did our saving in that
Little slot
We throw our money through
To make sure
When holiday comes around
We have our little money
No one could take out that money
Unless you have to, actually
Pull down the bed
Take off the mattress
Take off the spring
Remove everything from that bed
To get out the money
So that money will

Always be there
Til you ready for it
I remember
As a little man growing up
At the age of eight
I reach home early from school that day
My mom sent me to the store
To get something—
It was a tin of sardine
So while I was
Coming down the road
The bigger boys
Them coming from school
And I saw them
And I quickly
Tucked the sardine in my pocket
Not for them to see
What I am bringing with me
But they did
Saw
What I did
So when I reach up to them
They hold on to me and say
I want to see what's in your pocket
And they took out the sardines
And then started later
To call me sardine pocket
So that name
Stuck with me since i was eight
And many people know me
Call me sardine today
They leave out the “pocket”
So I remember that
Very moment
So I remember my
Athletic ability that I had
As a runner
Could run very fast
So that name
Becomes a household name
“Look at sardine!”
“He can run”
So I remember
Those moments in my life
I remember
Those moments in my life
Give thanks.

I Remember

I remember
I remember the market woman
How she comes around
With her banker and her head top
Shouting out
Buy your sweet oranges!
Buy your ripe banana!
And her repeating around the cart
“Meet me around the corner”
and me telling the market woman
“Yeah, I’ll meet you around the corner”
So buy your sweet oranges!
Buy your ripe banana!
As she walked along the road
With her banker and her head top
Shouting out in the neighborhood
Buy your sweet oranges!
Buy your ripe banana!
So I remember
When she stopped
And went around the corner
And people gathered round
To see what she had in her banker
Two pennies for this, two pans for this
Buy your ripe banana
Buy your sweet oranges
As she stands there
And people gather round her
I remember that market woman
Coming down the road
I remember.

Fortune Cookies

When your mouth opens, stories jump out.

Deaf ears give liars trouble.

Yvonne Whitehurst

I Remember

I remember when I went to Alaska
On a cruise
And I saw dolphins jumping in the water
I remember Thanksgiving
When I used to eat two plates of food
I always got sick
I remember when I took my son to kindergarten
And I thought he was gonna cry
and he pushed me away
I remember in Alaska
Seeing glaciers
I remember hearing the ice fall
And it sounded like thunder
A loud noise
Almost as if god were speaking to me
I remember in Alaska
The rain forest
When I first saw an owl
And he looked at me
Very suspicious.

Alaska

Come cruise with me
In the deep blue sea
To Alaska
Come see the dolphins play
Jumping high
To greet me
While the whales
Swam
Through the waves—
Come walk
Around
The rainforest
And meet the
Wise, old owl
Looking
Straight at *you*
With his big,
Beautiful eyes—

Come ride the tram
High above
In the sky
And view
The land of Juneau
The capital city—
Come visit
To see
The Eskimo
And feast
On a scrumptious
Meal
Of salmon
From the sea
Oh, come with me
To Alaska.

Fortune Cookies

Just stay on course and you win the game.

If you learn new technology, there's no one to blame.

Acting like a fool, you'll never be understood.

“Mother’s Prayer” for

Pastor Elect Wilbert Whitehurst, Jr. Sunday, October 8th, 2017

PASTOR

What I Pray For You:

GUIDANCE

For the paths your feet will daily follow...

WISDOM

For the counsel you are asked to give...

COMPASSION

For those you are called upon to help.

What I Wish for You:

STRENGTH

To stand for what is true and right, even when there is opposition...

COURAGE

To press on, even when things seem routine...

PERSERVERENCE

To follow the desires God has placed in your heart, even when you doubt,

What I Give to You:

SUPPORT

For your leadership...

APPRECIATION

For your calling and gifts...

THANKS

For the person you are in Christ.

GOD BLESS YOU, PASTOR!!!

Oh What a Day

It's five o'clock in the morning
and I roll out of bed
I went to the kitchen
to get a cup of coffee to clear out my head
I took a hot shower
and put on clean clothes
then I bent down to put on my shoes
and oh! I see my friend
Mr. Arthur Itis
and he said, "Don't forget to take your pills."

"Please, please Mr. Arthur Itis,
Don't visit me today.
My joints and muscles
Can't come out to play."

I'm feeling good now
So I'm on my way to work
It's a chilly day out
So my friend Mr. Burt Sitis said,
"You better go get your coat."

"Oh Mr. Burt Sitis,
don't get beside yourself.
I'll throw a warm blanket on your behind
And send you away."

Well I got through the day
and I'm on my way home.
When I hit the door, guess who met me.
There she was, Mrs. Mayra Graine,
singing the blues.

Arthur -Itis, Burt Sitis, and Mayra Migraine,
My painful friends who come to stay
and never want to leave.
I got news for you
I got tricks up my sleeve!

No pain today, have a nice day.

Fortune Cookies (in sequence from the show)

Carmen: It is easier to resist at the beginning than at the end

Donna H: Lick it, don't drop it.

Liz: Don't bury your secrets in your mind. Bury them in your backyard, so you can dig them up later.

Donna M: Share your joy by giving a genuine smile to at least one person daily.

Meghan: A principled person reaps success.

Janet: Your new iPhone cost \$1,000. It falls to the floor and the screen breaks.

Lyda: Chat with the cat in your soul, and save the conversation pieces to make a whole movie.

Carmen: If you're looking for a fortune, it's in another cookie

Donna H: Put it in your mouth and play with it.

Liz: *Una boca cerrada no cohe moscas.* A closed mouth won't catch any flies.

Donna M: Blaming someone is a strategy to hide one's own misdeeds. Redirect your focus.

Meghan: Setting a goal to live by today will create a brighter future.

Janet: Wear white clothes. You will spill your tomato sauce.

Ras: Circumstances make jackasses out of embraces.

Lyda: One knows this, another knows that, and the third knows why. All three can shape the whole ball of wax for the journey down the road.

Carmen: Confucius says, love is in triangle, not on square.

Donna H: there's always sun at the end of the rainbow

Liz: Today can be a huge improvement over yesterday.

Donna M: A man who takes a plane and flies to the top of the ladder toward power and wealth using the funds of those beneath him will do it time and time again. He needs to be dismissed

Meghan: Today is your day to shine.

Janet: Check your iPhone three times before crossing the street.

Ras: My greatest gift is life, and my greatest joy is a well of happiness.

Lyda: Helpful secrets are for learning, treasuring, and safe keeping as knowledge to bring and share along life's way.