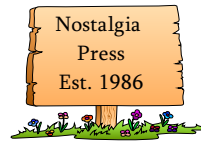


HEART

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POETRY

No. 9



1 Photo On the way to Elloree

2 The Muse Judith Adams ~ Langley, WA

3 The Devotee Judith Adams

4 Mother's Ring Sandra Ervin Adams ~ Midway Park, NC

5 The Meter Rob Goldman ~ Roslyn, NY

6 Metamorphosis Lucy Germany ~ Holly Lake Ranch, TX

7 The Death of A Good Man Lucy Germany

8 Inner Hebrides, 1990 Judith Hemschemeyer ~ Winter Park, FL

9 Photo A Farm

10 How Could It Be In My Usual Life? J. T. Milford ~ Lake Charles, LA

11 Faithfulness B. E. Stock ~ Brooklyn, NY

12 HEART POETRY AWARD Ruth Hill ~ Chetwynd, BC - Canada

13 Words Become Me Ruth Hill

14 Still Pond Ruth Hill

15 Color of My Eyes S. E. Waters ~ Nashua, NH

16 Blast From The Past Nick Sweet ~ Shepherd, TX

17 Photo Downtown Elloree

18 Sometimes A Simple Thing Leland James ~ Bellaire, MI

19 Kaleidoscope Man Leland James

20 The Men J. L. Schneider ~ Ellenville, NY

21 Mother Tongue Jason Spichal ~ Eau Claire, WI

22 The Last Mowing Karen Winterburn ~ Glenview, IL

23 Spaces Connie Lakey Martin ~ Elloree, SC

24 *Heartfully* Editor

Photos by Charles & Connie Martin

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THE MUSE

You come with your
ability to light candles in the dark,
and you know that poems like
wild animals can't be
confined by morphology
so you set the space
for what I am struggling to say
even when I miss it, you pick up the
pieces like a mother retrieving
a scattered jig saw!
And for efficiency you
get google
to send them back and
forth for remodel,
or a new interior because a
poem must be
roadworthy and you know
what I mean when I say
a poem's engine must hum.

Judith Adams
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THE DEVOTEE

Don't drag your
cushions all over the place
with much fanfare,
chanting in your
colorful pantaloons,
flapping shawls and
beads unraveling
at your entrance.
Be the 'bringer of plums'
the hummingbird lover
who settles at the back
with no preference,
no large need
for a certain brand of music,
tea party execution
or granola with cranberries.
Don't you agree,
'the bringer of plums'
is sweet, generous
and holy.

Sandra Ervin Adams
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MOTHER'S RING

Christmas Day.
 My big sister's house.
 Sitting in her recliner.
 She hands me a small
 black velvet box.
 I open the lid,
 a handwritten note inside.
Four small stones
in a band of gold:
Mama, Daddy, Sister,
and Me.
 The ring that was Mama's
 had slipped from my memory
 like Cinderella's shoe.
 I put it on,
 a perfect fit.

Rob Goldman
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THE METER

A quarter in the meter buys time,
 that most ephemeral commodity.
 Time to buy; to possess all things

tactile, visible and inscrutable.
 Time to run the course as seconds
 inexorably pass until CLICK, the meter

reads: *time expired*. Another quarter
 is dropped in buying more time;
 more time to do and more time to be.

There'll be a time when we hear the
 meter ticking louder and louder; a time
 when we turn and see all our yesterdays.

Walking through the wilderness of
 stones in Wellwood Cemetery, on
 every stone the words: *time expired*.

Standing by a stone belonging to someone
 I knew and loved, I reach into my pocket
 for quarter then try to find the slot.

Lucy Germany
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METAMORPHOSIS

Night blooming moth
 Moth blooming night....
 They descended on my tender age
 In a place where they could find me.
 I became a Polyphemus
 Samia Cynthia, Promethea
 All night dweller with brushed and powdered wings
 Because I liked the sound, the floral richness
 Of their names.
 I wondered why the artist of such amalgams
 Dust, wings and waves and peacock eyes
 Spent so much time on variations
 Not letting go the inexplicable concept of
 Moths big enough to hide a human hand.
 I watched them bombing from the sky
 While beer and honey trickled from the bark
 Where I had punctured deep
 Into an oak. Within the leaves I watched
 The larvae decorating branches like wild fruit.
 I claimed them with my captor's heart,
 Gathered them in boxes laced with leaves.
 Shuddered through all their painful sheddings
 To the slow dwindling of their lust,
 Their long sleep and final birth
 As furred bodies with carpet slipper legs
 Equipped to cling and finally to fly.
 The mystery of such change
 Forced me to wonder
 Is there a purpose here
 That I have not divined?
 Is it important that their worth be proved
 Proved for whom I had to ask
 The one whose art created them?
 Or me?

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THE DEATH OF A GOOD MAN

He was a good example
 Of somebody who should have lived
 Beyond his time,
 An example of how it pays to be good
 To help your neighbors
 And others who are not your neighbors.
 To paint street signs
 So people could remember where they live
 To fix the small aches and pains of mature houses
 Lived in by mature, lone women
 To give some sign of his waning life
 To the ordering of events
 For his community.
 Were not all of those advance payment
 For a few more years of hitting tennis balls
 And mowing grass
 For people he may not have really known
 At least not intimately or as relatives
 But souls in need, only in need?
 That's what attracted him.
 Maybe his work is not being recognized
 By a power residing elsewhere
 In some unverifiable place.

Judith Hemschemeyer
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INNER HEBRIDES, 1990

On the bus crossing Mull– I was bound for
Iona– a skinny, long-haired man
in the seat ahead lit up a cigarette!
“Excuse me sir,” I said. “You can’t smoke here.”

“Indeed I can,” he said. “The driver does.”
He was right, I saw. “Besides, I need it.
My mother had a heart attack
and the helicopter, Medivac,
was three hours getting here from Oban.

“Is she...?” “In hospital, very bad.
She’s all I had.” He was a fisherman, he said.
His wife, driven mad by boredom, had fled
and last year his partner had been swept
off the back of the boat in a storm.
“So here I am.” “You need the cig,” I said.

On the return trip from Iona,
our bus stopped for gas and I saw him again,
at the outdoor phone booth, his black hair
whipping around his face, his blue eyes wild.

Somehow, since my own mother had suffered
the same fate, I knew. So when I saw him
on the pier, waiting for the boat to Oban,
smoking, I went up to him and wrapped
my arms around this startled, aching man.
“Take care of yourself,” I said. I hope he did.



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HOW COULD IT BE IN MY USUAL LIFE?

How could it be in my usual life?
 That I am bathed in art music poetry
 and in clouds streams forests birds marshes
 and flowers and not recognize my
 deepest longings in these things?

Am I not in this world or am I so
 preoccupied that I have drowned
 in my tepid achievements and sunk below
 the event horizon?

Yet I know that a part of the natural world
 is not concerned with my longings
 but only to keep their ancient sacred calling

So what then for me?
 I must take all these things into my usual
 life and recast them into another mode
 A strange kind of living that's like
 my thoughts while walking alone
 in the woods on a late fall day
 with the sun sparkling through
 pine needles or listening to the poetry/
 music of Heggie/ Dickinson/Fleming
 Then abandoning my ordinary life
 for the atmospheric life.

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FAITHFULNESS

In the cold of early morning
 I put the kettle on
 The glory's all departed
 And the early friends are gone
 Though nothing's as it should be
 In a world that's gone astray
 I still can kiss my sweetheart
 In the dawning of the day

My limbs they ache and tingle
 And floaters fill my eyes
 And still the light is growing
 In a pink and orange sky
 If one of us is missing
 When the spring returns next year
 There'll be doves in all the sighing
 And gold in all the tears.



WINNER!
HEART POETRY AWARD
\$500
Ruth Hill
Chetwynd, BC -Canada

*"I like complicated thoughts
expressed in simple terms."*

~Ruth Hill

Ruth was born and educated in upstate New York. Ruth wanted adventure, so she explored the Adirondacks, Appalachia, and Alaska. She sailed British Columbia, and worked for BC Lightstations and the BC Forest Service. She became a Design Engineer. She is a lifelong dedicated tutor, and enjoys spoken word.

"Language is more than language to me. Inside a poem is a great artistic painting. There can be color, focus, perspective, and action. The universe generates music, and when you have this inside you, you can string words together that fit that music. Walking alone in the wilderness, I enjoy singing made-up psalms. They come from the air and go into the air as part of each day, part of breathing. They are meant to be forgotten like sand paintings. This music can be a perspective on language.

"When I *hear* a poem in my mind, it is far away, as in howling winds. It is difficult to capture. I am the listener, quieting my daily chaos to tune in to something beyond. I do not arrange the words. I only listen.

"I enjoy freedom. I like breaking all the rules. I like mixing up multiple metaphors and using words with many connotations. I like free word association. I like complicated thoughts expressed in simple terms. I write poems that are not clearly defined, like riddles, to stimulate the reader's imagination. Poetry allows sentence structure to be jumbled, pared down, expanded, or jettisoned. Sight and sound are not enough. Poetry has to have philosophy, too. I have noticed poets I am most attracted to have pleasing philosophies. They make me feel like I belong on Earth, not an alien in a foreign country. If someone likes something that I wrote, I feel as if I were invisible and am now seen, silent and can now speak, exiled but am now welcome. A reader on the same wavelength is the most important validation. If I met you in person I would be looking down and shifting my feet, but in a poem I can be the real me."

In her first three years of writing, Ruth has won contests and had many poems published. She uses poetry readings as her new excuse to travel.

Ruth Hill
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WORDS BECOME ME

"In the beginning was the word,
and the word was made flesh..."
It does not say the flesh moaned,
and became words.

So I am thinking,
maybe the song became the wren,
not the wren became the song,
passive participant, feather-shaking.
The squeaky-hinged hee-haw
of the stocky-haired, peg-legged
burden bearers
carried Mary to Bethlehem,
Jesus to Jerusalem,
walking on water, calming the storm,
walking on soft palms,
walking on air, bearing us there.

And our words,
with all their sorrow and depression,
shape our future from our past.
How seldom we speak
lofty words that last.

Will my words vary from reality,
or reality vary from my words?

I was a baby cooing.
I was a child's jump rope song.
I was a mother cooing to her baby,
a soothing grandma before long.

Out of a plywood Kentucky spire
seeps a Gaither gospel song:
"beautiful words, wonderful words..."
I will become wonderful words again.

I am a strong grey-haired donkey.
I am a branch-tipped singing wren.
My words shall reform my conscience.

I shall add wisdom to the political
discourse.

My morning prayers shall become my
reality.
I will seek and find lovely words to say.

Ruth Hill
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STILL POND

Still pond,
 without moving you reflect motion,
 swooping swan,
 unfolding clouds.
 Without saying anything,
 you echo the call of the kestrel,
 amplify incessant duck talk.
 Without knowing,
 you have witnessed a million years.



Without hearing,
 all vibrations under you
 allude to fish and minnows,
 or why would the birds
 love you so?
 Baby bubbles,
 splash and dash,
 dripping ripples.
 Your lily pads hide the roots
 the moose chews.
 Your cattail kapok
 once held up the British navy.
 Artists argue over your colors.
 Musicians sip from your lips.
 Weary deer water here.
 Tiny larvae writhe, hatch, and hop.
 Hikers stop.
 Are you still enough
 to catch a brilliant star?
 You are.

S. E. Waters
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COLOR OF MY EYES

Color of my eyes,
 of the lake and the sea,
 faraway mountains.

Color of where I have been,
 how I sometimes feel,
 of sea glass found on the beach,
 of the sky,
 and of my daughter's eyes, no surprise.

Color of my car,
 of my favorite tee shirt
 and my jeans.
 Can't forget the bumper stickers,
 love or hate em', they are blue too!

Color between the twinkling stars,
 all things clear to me,
 those healing,
 it's in the rainbow above, surrounded by other hues,
 it is both a feeling and a choice.
 It is in the air, in nature,
 a color I will never lose.

Nick Sweet
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BLAST FROM THE PAST

I miss those jocks of yesteryear, those wonderful deejays
 Who energized the airwaves in so many ways
 A pack of P.M. poets, sultans of the squib
 Their frenzied flow of live jive, rhythmical and glib

Back then my small transistor was friendly broadcast balm
 For adolescent acne and always sweaty palms,
 Whenever my life seemed like hell, I turned the dial toward heaven
 And tuned in Wild Willy on one-o-six-point-seven

*This is Wild Willy, king of the kilocycles, conveyor of country classics
 'bout tear-stained pillows and armadillos, buckin' broncs and honky tonks,
 Rowdy guys, unfaithful wives and heavy hearts hurtin' in 4/4 time*

The moment that the ads came on, I'd twist the dial once more
 To seek out Alexander Heat on Smokin' 94

*It's Alex Heat in the driver's seat, I got stacks of wax,
 platters that matter, a smatter of chatter and patter that flatters,
 Let's start in the golden grooveyard, it's old dust, but it's gold dust,
 A stroll in the rain down memory lane.*

Sometimes close to 2 a.m. before the station knocks off
 I'd locate Late Night Larry, the jock who rocks your socks off

*ARE YOU READY for some white hot, sock hop, flip top, non-stop be bop?
 ARE YOU READY for the low down, new found, high ground uptown boss sound?
 ARE YOU READY for the slip slide, flip side, joyride, lost tribe, cool vibes?
 ARE YOU READY for some new moon, back room, rough-hewn big boom soul tunes?*

I was always ready, and I had always known
 With Larry and his colleagues on that I was not alone

Even on the bleakest nights of lonely teenage angst
 I truly owned by "on-air" friends a debt of blessed thanks
 If I'd battled with my parents, or if my heart was broken
 I'd call them at the station; their lines were always open.



Leland James
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SOMETIMES A SIMPLE THING

Birches bending in the summer breeze,
 garden swaying bright with daffodils,
 sun on hills of green nearby
 – summer sky, it seems so high;

Don't it make you wonder why?

Branches broken by a freezing rain,
 garden gone to brown and gray,
 snowcapped hills so far away
 – hills pressed to the winter sky;

Don't it make you wonder why?

Sometimes a simple thing so far away,
 sometimes nearby: the Author found
 in snowcapped hills and daffodils
 – the rounding of imperfect rhymes.

And don't it make you wonder why?

Leland James
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KALEIDOSCOPE MAN

The old man made kaleidoscopes
 from paper tubes and bits of glass,
 gave them to kids, a neighborhood of us
 who knew him.

The old man said to me, slightly drunk:
 "It's how you see when you're old like me,
kaleidoscopically, not the pieces,
 the all together differently."

– I nodded, understanding not a word of it. –

The old man sorted among pebbles, shiny beads,
 bits of lass, wood scraps and tubes of glue.
 His workbench like his life I came to see
 – shards of mirror everywhere.

"*Not once and for all*," he said,
 fitting the bright colored glass and blades
 of mirror, his fingers rhyming with his stories,
 the all-together of lives before.

Roustabout in circuses and fairs,
 deckhand, cook, truck driver,
 shoveler of dirt, manure, and snow,
 a wife in her grave, far away.

(His daughter had taken him in, but he didn't say much about that.)

The old man's fingers filled a long silence.
 He was gone, then remembered me there.
 He handed me the kaleidoscope: "The Blue's,
 that's Montana, color of my Bessie's eyes."

The red, that's Georgia clay, a touch a Colorado,
 had a pard there name a Billy Joe,
 could dance, play the harmonica, and twirl a lasso
 – and the black and gray, that's pourin' rain."

J. L. Schneider
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THE MEN

The outlines of pine shadows sharp
as adumbrate men come and go
on a fresh overnight snow. Sunshine
snowsqualls west—I'm almost 40, the hill
of ice-coated trees crowned with white
glistening brilliance. Every night at dusk

the line of men on the hill
with the sun behind them silently
watch. I know what they want.
When they turn and walk below
the rise, I follow them all
through summer and back
but never catch them.

I believed in those men—
as fathers there then gone, as dreams
that stayed and fled—until
every sultry dusk had the hoar
of winter dying. I remember laughing out,
my slowness up the hill, my untryng.

Jason Splichal
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MOTHER TONGUE

Like any rhythm
We are made of sounds and silences

The perception of a beat
And the anticipation of the next

This affinity for pattern
Is born in the womb

Where our first sense of identify
Is the heart's own echo

Syncopating with our mother's pulse
Our fetal brains are the ultimate sonographers

Surfing every sine wave
Until we become our ricochets

The tempo of life is transduction
Translated in aquatic quarter tones

Measured in Megahertz
Mother and child— the first collective

Our first communion
Under the tip of every tongue

Karen Winterburn
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THE LAST MOWING

Sweet as the folds
of Nana's apron on baking day,
broken-open green apple-
sweet stung by lemon:
the last grass Daddy cut

bled sharp fresh green
into the last breath Daddy took,
that fell where he fell,
face to the sudden cuttings,
my laugh to cry.

Sweet sachet of clover sighed
like cinnamon dust
over the finished whole of it,
as if to scent and seal in
the memory.

Connie Lakey Martin
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SPACE

Must we fill every empty space?
What is wrong with space apart,
nothing in between, unattached,
no one beside, or near.
There is freedom in space.
Easier to clean, you can see what's behind.
Nothing to face, undo, or erase.
Space, sweet silent space.

But you know how it works.
Empty spaces don't stay empty long.
Someone will want your empty space.
How much space do you really need?
Outer space, inner space, it's only space.
So you give space away, you don't care,
it's only space.
Then roar like a lion when it's gone.

What a mystery we are in space.
How sad the unsung, unneeded,
unnoticed spaces.
But the sacred spaces love leaves
are canyons you can never cross
or ever fill.

Heartfully

Elroy! That's what Dad slips and calls the Town of Ellore.

In his defense, he lives in Virginia, and there are lots of towns in South Carolina with unfamiliar and unusual names.

Ellore, a small southern town with a big heart for heritage and its large farming community. My husband and I have moved our empty nest here from Orangeburg where we raised our children and lived 41 years. We sold our two-storied home for a small cottage one mile from the Santee State Park and Lake Marion, where we camped once with my parents many years ago. It was during this camping trip Dad made his infamous trip to the IGA General Grocery in Ellore to pick up a few things and walked out leaving one of his bags. Upon returning to the campsite, he said, *I've got to go back to Elroy!*

It's been Elroy ever since. Never guessed we'd live here.

We moved during the fall season of earth, and fall of our lives. Like autumn leaves, we were changing, losing our grip, floating, and piling up!

We joined the First Baptist Church of Ellore. Although we have relocated, I'm thankful God hasn't, and never will.

I've been staring out the windows of our new home. Thinking. Remembering all that was. Wondering what all now is.

Waiting for words to come. Words to write, descriptive words, passionate words, any words at all actually. Sometimes there are just no words. Only feelings. Random thoughts. Thoughts you cannot harness, corral, or pen.

But the words will come.

Words that will show up unexpected, like a good friend when you need them most. They always do.

Ellore, Daddy, Ellore. I love you Daddy!

~Connie Lakey Martin, Editor

