

HEART



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POETRY

No. 5



CONTENTS

Cover Photo - Pearson Falls - Saluda, NC

- 2 Winner Heart Poetry Award John Thomas "J.T." Milford ~ Lake Charles, LA
3 Fishing by Moonlight John Thomas "J.T." Milford ~ Lake Charles, LA



Honorable Mentions

- 4 A Time for Pears John Thomas "J.T." Milford ~ Lake Charles, LA
6 Heart's Desire Jan Chronister ~ Maple, WI
7 Glass in the Garden Jan Chronister ~ Maple, WI
8 Bayside Night Anthony DeGregorio ~ Kent Lakes, NY
9 Burning the Leaves Jeannine Dobbs ~ Merrimack, NH
10 Loneliness Ben Onachila ~ Brevard, NC
11 The Lemon Tree Ben Onachila ~ Brevard, NC
12 Horachek's Field Nedra Rogers ~ Lawrence, KS
13 I Buy the Dress Nedra Rogers ~ Lawrence, KS
14 Remembering Art Schwartz ~ Rockville Centre, NY
16 Getting to Your House Art Schwartz ~ Rockville Centre, NY



- 18 May's Café Nick Sweet ~ Ardmore, OK
19 My Father's Woodpile Nick Sweet ~ Ardmore, OK
20 Duck Brenda Kay Ledford ~ Hayesville, NC
21 Lady of the Lake Brenda Kay Ledford ~ Hayesville, NC
23 Complicated Sadness Connie Lakey Martin ~ Orangeburg, SC

- 24 HEARTFULLY Connie Lakey Martin, Editor
25 Meet "The Stapler" Charlie Martin

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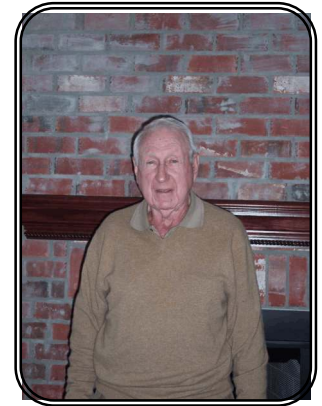
HEART POETRY AWARD \$500

"FISHING BY MOONLIGHT"

by

John Thomas "J.T." Milford
Lake Charles, Louisiana

" I began writing poetry in the 1960's, tuning in and joining with America's great decade of expression. I continued occasionally writing through the '70's, 80's and into the '90's. At the end of 1995, I retired from public practice as a CPA and began to take a greater interest in writing. I have no formal training in writing, so I have had to read in order to understand something about writing poetry. I feel that I write in order to express my feelings about events, things, and people I observe in life. I owe Jendi Reiter of Winning Writers (www.winningwriters.com) a great deal for her help and constructive critique."



On composing his winning poem, J.T. says, "I was looking through a classical CD catalogue and saw a composition by Robin Milford called *Fishing by Moonlight*. Since we both have the same family name, I ordered the CD. I was very impressed by his music and sad for his early tragic death. He wrote the composition about a painting with the same title by Aert van der Neer. My poem reflects Robin Milford's music and my own experiences in night fishing. The word *chromatic* in the poem pays homage to the nature of Robin Milford's music."

J.T. was born in Lake Charles, Louisiana on September 1, 1929. He graduated in 1953 from the University Southwestern Louisiana, now known as The University of Louisiana at Lafayette. He also attended McNeese State University.

His winning poem *Fishing by Moonlight* (opposite page) and his Honorable Mention *A Time for Pears* (page 4) are his first to be published.

J. T. Milford
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FISHING BY MOONLIGHT

A light breeze picks up as the moon
 Rises over the lake
 We stop the boat and get ready to fish
 Bait the hooks and talk in whispers
 Then a long silence

Shadowy trees like dark ghosts
 Line the distant shore
 And the waves reflect the sparkling
 Moonlight all the way to the boat
 Bait the hooks and talk quietly
 Then a long silence

The stars seem mysterious with
 Their distant chromatic light
 And the soft moonlight fills us with a
 Thrill of being in this time and place
 Fishing by moonlight
 Pull up the fish and drop it in the ice chest
 Bait the hook and talk awhile
 Then a long silence

The moon is now late in the night sky
 A moon of many thoughts
 A dreaming moon
 This transfigured night
 I wonder maybe, just maybe, this night
 Is something like the kingdom of heaven?
 Silence and exhilaration with showers of light

J.T. Milford
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A TIME FOR PEARS

The liquid moon
 Spills its full light down on
 Gleaming clusters of early white blossoms
 Reflecting a canopy of virginal light

From a sultry blue sky
 The scarlet sun burns its rays
 On a rippled sea of leaves
 Hiding the still green fruit

Then comes quiet September
 The enduring tree is transformed
 And lights up noble and glowing
 On the golden eve of the gathering

As the luminous sun and earth
 Again grace us with pears
 And the rhythm of life
 Begins to change



Jan Chronister
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HEART'S DESIRE

A jar of hand-picked strawberries
sits in my son's refrigerator.
Left on my last visit,
each red fruit
pulses through the
clear cool glass
free of blemishes, soft spots
and clusters of bitter seeds.

I wonder if he will eat
these fleshy valentines
or leave them to spoil untouched.

Four hundred miles away
I set out young berry plants,
snip runners like umbilical cords
and feel a quick tug at my heart.

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GLASS IN THE GARDEN

Digging dirt as fine as cake mix
I collect buckets of rocks
that float to the surface
from a cold, dark past.

Among them are agates,
shiny tiny slivers
buried in clay for millennia.

Green glass catches my eye;
this is pocketed
or it will return
like cutting dreams of abusive boyfriends
I can't seem to dull.

I toss toy wheels,
bent nails,
machinery parts,
remnants of years of dumping.

Purified of trash,
I plant in peace.

Anthony DeGregorio
Kent Lakes, New York

BAYSIDE NIGHT
(After Hagiwara Sakutarō)

Evening undresses above the bay.
Its flesh drenches a cool blackness.

Flickering lights from another shore.
A thousand green and yellow eyes glazed with distance, chill.

Shades of blue disappear. The red pulse of a private plane
descending
the only variation left in the sky.

Southeast through the trees a steady stream
of houses and streetlights
advances without movement.

The red heartbeat of a warning beam throws
a lifeline the width of the visible water.

A loon cries. A dog's sharp bark skims the thin
surface silence.
A sweet dark smoke drifts in through the screens.

The scent of dawn teases a resistant horizon.
Darkness blushed, exposed into retreat.

A huge sailboat regains its delicate shape of
half moon and crosses.
The lobster boat coughs its boxy miniature south.

Empty traps returned, splashless. Eggs sizzle
unattended, overcook in sputtering fluorescence.

Jeannine Dobbs
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BURNING THE LEAVES

Remember when everyone did it
before there were permits
remember the sound of our raking
like kids at matinees whispering
sheets rustling on clotheslines

Raking quickly until the merest hint
of a blister then proudly but slowly
growing the pile outwards and upwards
sometimes stooping and swooping
heaving it like it was dirt . . .
but due to the lightness of leaves
most falling back to the earth
wind-strewn, recaptured, returned
while the dog went berserk
leaping and barking and nipping
as if leaves were chickens
the kids throwing themselves
literally into their work
then dusk settling in
the breeze dying down
the garden hose nearby for safety

And somebody calling for matches
the rest of us stopping and watching
the first leaf timidly catching
then cheers going up
and the smell of not quite paper or wood
the lush smoke billowing into the darkening sky
blurring the house that we lived in
the whole neighborhood.

Ben Onachila
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LONELINESS

When you came,
I put my loneliness
in the wash basin with
my dirty socks and
thread bare t-shirts.
It would not cling to
either but, swished around
and sudsed up, would
separate itself from
any company.
Now, I keep it in its
own drawer, look in
on it now and then,
but it doesn't like that!
So, occasionally, it hides
and I find it in a shoe box
under the bed, like an
escaped pet hamster or
it curls between the pages
of a book like a
dark houred memento.
(It prefers Lord Jim to
the others on my shelves.)
Once, we played hide and seek.
It hid so well I forgot
about it, didn't know it
was missing at all until
like leaves appearing on
a tree in spring it
showed itself
everywhere.

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THE LEMON TREE

In the corner of Ramsey's Barbershop
 in half a whiskey barrel on an old
 Wells Fargo safe
 a lemon tree out of place
 while the Great Lakes winter rolled along.
 Lemons hanging heavy like heads soured
 with the daily pulp of life
 wondering where the sweetness and warm
 sunshine have gone.
 All that promise of spring to come
 now past, and the men, come to lower
 their ears from greying tops and have
 the back of their necks shaved with
 a straight razor
 approach the tree so out of place
 and make comment on those branches
 heavy with the fruit of life.

Nedra Rogers
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HORACHEK'S FIELD

You know they had a laugh or two—
 those marketers who came up with names
 for the subdivisions springing up around here:
 Coachlight Meadows, Terrace Glen,
 Nottingham Estates, Villas of Southampton.
 It's as if developers would like for us to think
 we're not in Kansas anymore.

I shouldn't be surprised, I guess,
 to see the big yellow Komatsu trackhoe
 tear up what used to be Horachek's
 soybean field. It's hard to watch
 the cedars and the Osage orange trees go.
 That hedgerow's been around since
 Dust Bowl days. It was good shade.

I used to watch Louie Horachek pitch
 hedge apples clear across the pond.
 His mother kept a few beneath her sink.
 They'll keep the bugs away. I learned
 such things, and Louie showed me how
 to fish with a cane pole, how to find
 arrowheads along Mulberry Creek.

I envied him—all that wild space.
 He thought I was the lucky one—not having
 to wake at dawn to chase a stubborn milk cow
 to the barn. Summer afternoons would find us
 in the horse tank listening to KOMA,
 and if there was lightning storm,
 we'd spread a blanket down to watch

and fantasize all kinds of things—living
 in a fallout shelter, life after the atomic war.
 We'd envision UFOs and flying cars, robots
 or Triffids taking over, but we never once
 imagined the Komatsu Yellow Dragon
 or that Horachek's field would some day
 become Highlands of Kensington.

Nedra Rogers
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I BUY THE DRESS

Because I love
aquamarine. I don't
need it, and I've never
spent so much
on a dress. A luxury.
That's what it is.

Because it's pastel,
perfect for a summer
wedding, should there
be one. That's not
true. I buy the dress
because I want
to look beautiful
for you.

Because I hear
a woman in the mirror
whisper, *Please*. Because
I want to slip
myself into a sea
of blue and green.

Aqua marina, salty
waves breaking against
my knees. Cold foamy
ocean I can't keep
from flowing through my toes.
I buy the dress

because I know
it's what I'll need
to wrap myself in as I watch
your mighty vodka
ocean swallow after
swallow win.

Art Schwartz
Rockville Centre, New York

REMEMBERING

When you ran abreast the wind
And your parts sang all their proper roles,

When your laugh was proof against worry
And your word the end of trouble,

When you raised an arm and fist
That crashed destroying cruelty,

And your voice was heard and made
For changes to the better,

When you lusted madly and then
Loved more madly still,

Careless only of yourself
But never for several others,

When your house stood on foundations
Of delight by day and into night,

And the giggling squeals of little ones
Bounced off the walls into the street,

Then for this gift of remembering,
Smile at the morning, and say your thanks at night.



Art Schwartz
Rockville Centre, New York

GETTING TO YOUR HOUSE

Of all the things I know,
I think the best
is how to get to your house
through the winding alley
to the boulevard,
and then across the lot,
and then the streets.

The firehouse,
the market place,
the school all urge me on,
they aren't only objects anymore;
they tell me where I am,
they say I haven't lost my way
and that I still remember.

Even so, I worry
that I might forget a turn
and then become confused
in noise and smoke
among the factories
and find myself in
some strange, other place.

I know it's foolishness
to worry I'll forget
a thing like that which is
myself, and part of me forever,
and yet I often think
I might forget the most
important thing I know.



Nick Sweet
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MAY'S CAFÉ

The old-timer at May's Café held down the corner booth
He'd ascertain your obstacles then briefly say the sooth
Newcomers approached one day and sought his sagely views
The fellow said, "What's this town like?" The old man asked,
amused.

"What's it like where you came from?" The couple shared a frown
Said he, "Misguided malcontents, who'd snub you when you're
down,"
Said she, "Hardheaded hypocrites, who never took the blame,"
The old man answered sadly, "This town is just the same."

Another pair from out of town stopped to dine at May's
Drifted toward the corner booth, caught the old man's gaze
"We just moved here," the woman said, "and wondered what it's
like."
Her husband interjected, "We're just from down the pike,

We left a slice of paradise, said 'so long' to neighbors
Who welcomed us like kinfolk, showered us with favors,"
"The dearest friends!" his wife exclaimed, and wiped a wistful tear
The old man said, "Don't worry, it's just like that here."

Nick Sweet
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MY FATHER'S WOODPILE

My father cuts his firewood, his chain saw smokes and spits
Though he's two years past fourscore, a lot of wood is split
The midday sun is searing; his energy is waning
Still he stalks the timber, intent and uncomplaining

Sweat pours off in rivulets, wood chips pierce his skin
Though covered in shavings, he stacks it to his chin
I wonder why his woodpile never seems diminished
Why every time I visit him his work is never finished

Then in an epiphany, it's all precise and clear
Why, when the day is oven-hot, he'll gamely persevere
Whoever hears my father's prayers would never take a man
With an abundant woodpile stacked by his own hand

His saw then jams with halting growls, he strains to extricate it
And once again attacks the log, his purpose unabated
I view this self-reliant man who never seems defeated
And wonder: Can I face the day his woodpile is depleted?

Brenda Kay Ledford
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DUCK

In the bedroom there is a mallard
carved from maple
who hangs over my mirror
and glides while I sleep.

He glides across frosted walls
watching with marble eyes
as I brush my hair
and put on pajamas.

He swims while the Harvest Moon
pours apple cider
through lace curtains
and Venus stands sentinel

at her ring seat.
He bobs under the water
and makes waves with
webbed feet until fire

blazes across the horizon
and I find him gliding
across my room gazing
like a ghost.

Brenda Kay Ledford
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LADY OF THE LAKE

mountains reflecting
on the lake
purple and plum ripples

striking each note
scaling highs and lows
waves lapping the shore

a lady waltzing
beside Lake Chatuge
skirts twirling

my sister
piecing the quilt—
her legacy

Brenda Kay Ledford served as poetry judge for winner of this edition's Heart Poetry Award. She will also judge poems entered for contest deadline June 30, 2009. She lives in Hayesville, North Carolina, and writes regularly for the *Smoky Mountain Sentinel* and *Clay County Progress*. Please visit Brenda's website to read her bio and discover her literary publications at www.brendakayledford.com



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COMPLICATED SADNESS

It is simply complicated, feeling sadness,
and feelings are rarely easy to explain,
but sadness feels as feelings are,
elaborately complex, and confusing,
a silent wrecking force, shady, unidentifiable,
demanding, but refusing, to be comforted.
Difficult to be done with sadness,
until sadness is done with you.

Sadness, exhaustive sadness, stalks,
searches for understanding, examines, fights sleep,
remembers, remembers, remembers,
cradles the bittersweet,
feels sadness for the sadness of others.
Sadness robs the breath of spring,
leaves no heart for green, growing
or blooming things.
No bouquets.

I do not fear sadness, for it is only a feeling
similar to night, and night, however dark,
only owns a few small sad hours,
because dawn dependably and unsparingly arrives,
easy, faithful, unmeasured dawn, uncluttered,
quietly, generously through your window dawn,
and hope. Soft, sweet, understanding hope, whispering
forgetting, forgetting, forgetting.
Certain, clear, identifiable hope,
simply uncomplicated.

Heartfully

Do you wonder what your mission is in life? Your special mark of achievement?
I saw a story recently on NBC nightly news "Making a Difference," about a young woman in Philadelphia whose daily jogging path ran past a homeless shelter, where sad, jobless men, some recovering addicts, would look up and wave as they watched her run by. Day after day as she jogged past them, she looked behind and observed their troubled faces. She kept asking herself the same question: *How can I help these folks get moving and back on their feet again?*

She found the answer in her question. She formed an organization called "Back on My Feet Again," a runner's club, and recruited those sad, homeless, jobless men to begin jogging together, hoping their runner's high would help them get moving, back into life again and job training. They eventually became teams and entered races. When interviewed they said jogging made them feel good, healthier, gave them a feeling of some control in their life, and restored their self-confidence to apply for jobs.

A simple thing. Running. The young jogger turned running into a mission of encouragement.

And so I ponder the paths where I run today. Am I running past anyone? Should I slow down for a second look? Is there something someone needs? What could I do that would make a difference in anyone's life?

Some make it their mission to *find* their mission. Sometimes you do not know your mission until you have completed it.

In the Bible, often God's message was simply "Go." When God says "Go!" He's either got a better place for you, or needs you to help others find their better place.

The Great Commission to Christians from Jesus begins with "Go." "Go ye therefore into all the world . . ."

Go is what we earthlings do best.

Go to work, earn. Go to the grocery store, feed. Go to school, prepare. Go to church, believe. Go on a mission trip, restore. Go on vacation, be restored. Go visit your neighbor who is sick or discouraged, encourage.

Mission accomplished?

Go.

Run!

Connie Lakey Martin
Editor



Meet "The Stapler" - Charlie.



After all the copies of HEART are printed and assembled, Charlie applies the finishing stamp of approval...

two staples on the side.

Thanks Charlie!

~Connie
Wife Editor