

THE LISTENING MAN

and other poetry and verse by
philip buttà

The Listening Man

Poems, songs, stories, and assorted mental meanderings.

Philip Buttà

DRAFT

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Foreword

There are poems, lyrics, and free verse.

Some of these writings go back to the early 70s.

This work is dedicated to my beautiful wife, Eva,
who makes all that I am possible.

In memoriam: to my first Goldrush, Katie.
as well as the ever noble, Wendy,
and all my good boys especially Moosie
To all the animals who let me share this time with them
I am so privileged.

I must also include many of you with
your lives and experiences; what you have and what you've lost.
Our friendships and connections are my motivation.

And my most powerful influences: Sister Grace Maureen
who encouraged and allowed us to sing,
create, and see beyond the textbooks.

To R.Z. "Zack" Manna
who inspired me to pay attention to the details
as well as the big picture.

To us! ... And to those who would be like us.

Any profits go to animal rescue.

RESCUE. FOSTER. ADOPT.

Listen to the songs and read more at
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.....
IT IS HERE, STILL.

Am I the man of whom you wrote?
Have I become so that you no longer see my love?
Look! It is here, still.

Though hidden beneath the years
Oft times, it struggles.
But see? It is here, still.

It is here in the shadows of my failures;
In the halls of my pride and despair;
Gasping and clutching the thin air of our fragile romance.
But look! It is here, still.

Although my heart's voice has become weak
And its fluid runs not so warm
Cry not, my life and love ...
for beneath this iron veil hides your true man;
Who's cowardly faults are his deafness to your sighs
And his blindness to your tears.

So, weep not.
For my love is like the returning Spring.

Look! It is here. Still.

.....
FLOWERS

There are still flowers growing within the garden
amongst the thorns and bramble.

Not separate from them ... side by side.

Not long time passing ...

Long time silent.

.....
"sometimes we expect more from others because WE EXPECT SO MUCH of ourselves. "
.....

.....
EMPTY SPACE

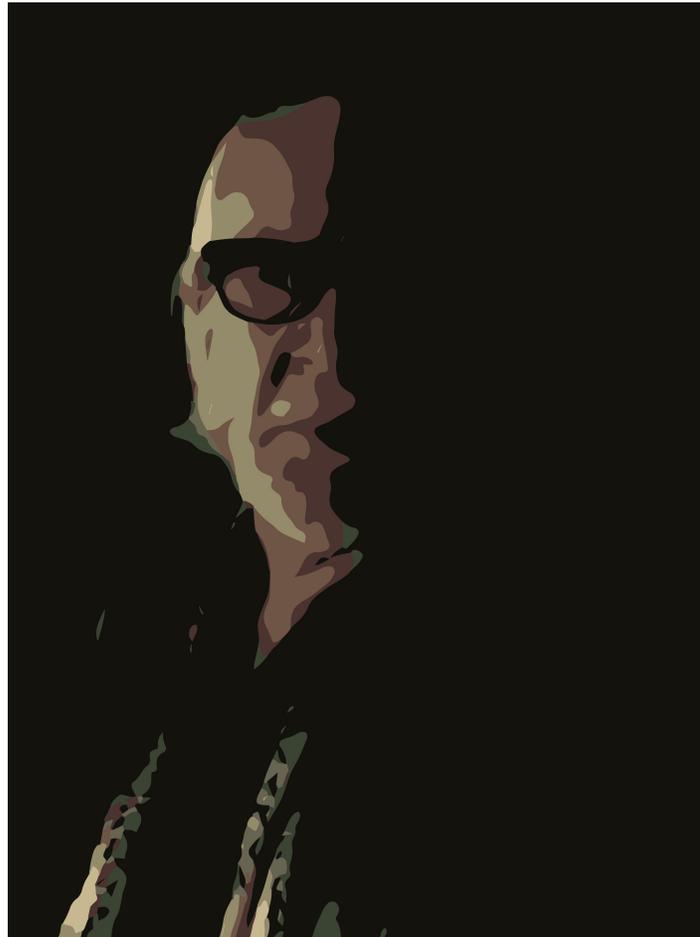
I am challenged so I ne'er repeat
The choices that I made
That held me here in dull defeat.
Throughout this weak charade.
The questions fallen on me
my shadow follows still,
I've wrestled with it continuously yet
It haunts me ever still.
The solace that I never found
to satisfy my tastes.
The grasp escapes me as I flail
my arms in empty space.
The one last dream is there to dream
that never has come true?
The desperate frenzied chance that I
might one day be with you.

WHISPERS

There are scratches on the deadbolt ,
wet stains on the welcome mat.
I hear pathetic whispers,
but I'm not going back.

Were we so misused that we did not see
how saddened we appeared to be?
As we stumbled through our conjoined life
like deformed twins spared by the knife?

It's much kinder to each others' hearts
if we end it now before it starts.
Before we shuffle off to awkward beats
in the same direction down different streets.



.....
WHO ARE THESE POLITICAL FOLLOWERS?

The greedy and self centered ... the blind ambitious people who care little about those around them ... the heartless self-preservationists ... who care about no one but their own ... who sacrifice nothing ... who live in that gray twilight of not being a part of this society preferring to remain isolated within their little ice cold self-made worlds ... oblivious to the wanderers among them who bring charity, light, hope, and possibilities. How can so-called civilized people turn their backs on the students, artists, poets, dancers, musicians and dreamers ... the animals, the rivers, the mountains, the forests ... and the air we breathe?

I don't know.

If we turn into cold, calculating, heartless bankers worried only about how the dollars add up ... how can we live under the banner of the greatest society ... the noblest civilization ... on earth?

We're Americans for god's sake!
Isn't that supposed to mean something good?

Maybe nostalgia has taken over my point of view.

Good!

.....
THE VEIL OF HATE

Our leaders are bankers and magicians.
Guiding us toward the abyss.

Where is the light that will save us? Who carries the Shield of Hope
And wields The Blades of Courage?

Who will protect the defenseless? The voiceless? The poor and infirm?

Who will stand for our honor in the face of evil as it lurks behind
A shadow of lies and a veil of hate?



EASY WAY OUT

Leaving the highway for a cool mountain road
Concrete behind me and a much lighter load.
Just got home, I was wasting my time
Searching for something that I could not find.

Just got a look at how the other half fares.
Some got it better and the rest just don't care.
Squeezing by with the clothes on their backs
Or riding around in their new Cadillacs.

The grass sure looks greener 'til you get up real close.
We don't have a palace but it's better than most.
So just sit down beside me in this piece of my heart.
Home in the country ... that's a good place to start.

I can sure understand. There's no easy way out
Searching for something I don't need there's no doubt.
So I put on my boots and I still play the game.
Wake up tomorrow and do more of the same.



SLEEP

I will not sleep until I can dream no more.
'til the petals flower soft across the floor.

I will not turn on this coward's feet
As I weeping stumble on your darkened street
Toward the whispered prayers of those who knew
What time had taken away from you.

I can't forget what is in my heart, so
I will not sing while you cannot.



IN VITRO

Is there someone outside there who's
Waiting for me to appear?

Is there something outside there that's
Worth it for me to leave here?

Can you give me a reason to leave
For a world that I cannot conceive?

I'm the one that you asked for,
The one who will soon set you free.

I can feel what you're feeling,
you're scared "because you don't understand.

Is your innocence making you wish
That I'd stay where I am?

Your heart feeds me and runs through my veins.
Is the emptiness all that remains?

I'm the one that you asked for,
The one who will soon set you free.

Will you love me, protect me,
Deliver me ... when will this end?

Will you stand there beside me
Regardless of what happens then?

Like a wind that refuses to die
I will always be there by your side.

I'm the one that you asked for
The one who will soon set you free.



IT'S ONE THING TO ADMIT WHEN YOU ARE WRONG
And another to be silent when you are not.



.....

"OFT TIMES, you find what you're seeking - once you've stopped looking."

.....

INSIDE OUT

The door is closed but I can see through a window shade
You're standing there on the inside.
It's getting cold. I shiver out here all alone.
I'm waiting here on the outside.

You seem to think because I was born on a different street
We'd have no chance together.
Though I come to you with a different point of view
We're both the same on the inside.

We're hanging on your every word
We're hanging on your every word

Whisper in my ear your plans to get away from here
Will you run with me on the outside?

Don't be afraid of the choices that you made
They'll all work out on the outside
I spent some time to tell the world that you'd be mine
Here with me ... together

.....

GOOD FRIENDS are one of life's true accomplishments.

.....

I WALK, IN SOLITUDE and in silence, down a narrow, twisting road. I see and hear only snippets of light and sound as they poke through the darkness that warms my soul. It is comforting and secure ... and permits me the opportunity to visualize ... and focus on my thoughts and questions.

Occasionally and unexpectedly this path widens to a broad avenue filled with people and animals, and music, and colors ... and many things exciting and thrilling! So many things that it is difficult to grab onto one and hold it and wonder ... to smell it and taste it ... to feel it and love it ... before it slips away and is replaced by yet another ... and another ... and so on and so on until exhausted ... I turn a corner and stumble back onto that familiar, quiet road where the vacuum of peace again surrounds me.



THE ROAD

After the fire, after all the rain
Back on the road, burn my heels again.
Climbing out from what's deep inside;
Where can I turn to? I can't decide.

After the snow has begun to melt,
Writing down all the things I felt.
Packed my bags and my old guitar;
Back on the road going way too far.

After the truth after all the lies
Will you still recognize me in my new disguise?
I changed my image so nothing's revealed
I don't give a damn ... that's the way I feel.

After the looks after all the stares
They can say what they want I don't really care.
Back on the road with my new point of view
It's this kind of thing that helps to pull me through.



FINAL WORDS

"I know I wasn't the best of mates, it's too late to make amends.
I did my best and rest assured ... I loved you all, my friends.
I ask one thing before I say adieu... before my final wave ...
Would it be too much to ask that you ... put my name above my grave?"



SHINE

I will not wait until you're gone to say what's on my mind. What good are words of praise and love if I can't see your smile or hold your hand? Let me tell you now how much I treasure your friendship and how you make this life of mine so complete. Let me hold you in my arms and share the warmth I feel. Let me not speak so late that my words fall into empty space and my voice rises only to Almighty's ears. Allow me to say now, while we shine together during these delicate moments, that I love you ... and my prayer is that our lives remain meshed as one ... for as long as time allows ... so that when the inevitable does appear ... absence is but a whisper ... and memories are a song.

.....
PAULA'S SAUCER

I may not be what I once was.
My colors shine not so bright and
I settle quite unsteady but I am here
... still ... with you ... as I have always been.
Where would I go if not with you?"

Maybe you will move me off to one side,
behind the plants someplace I might hide.
I can still catch the water when you watered too much,
I can still feed the cat up there on the hutch.
You can use me to safeguard your money and keys,
I can still function nicely as an ashtray for free.

Where's that candle that lighted our late night sojourn?
You can use me to make sure your tables won't burn.
And those raccoons remember me out in the snow
... they sure did appreciate the food on the go.
So you see I can still help you out around here,
and I won't cause no trouble ... of that I'll be clear.

Although I may not look like I did when brand new,
I can still hold some memories of my long time with you.
If you really do think that my time here is done;
What more can I say? It's been lots of fun!

.....
MORPHINE

I sense you're next to me. Your morphine helps
but my wounds just won't heal
That's just the way I feel
Is this all there is ... eternally.

I'm falling back to sleep
The darkness comforts me it seems unreal
I like the way it feels.
Is this all there is? Eternity.

Lost within my dreams
The streets are black the fog is cold as steel
Don't like the way it feels.
Is this all there is ... eternally.

.....
WITH THESE HANDS

With these hands	I can warm your soul. I can beg for more. I can tend your fire.
With these hands	I can take you higher.
With these hands	I can lead the way. I can make them pay. I can plead your case.
With these hands	I caress your face.
With these hands	I will comfort you. I will work with you. I will ease your pain.
With these hands	I will hold your hand.
With these hands	I will lift you up. I will make them stop. I will make you strong.
With these hands	I will take you home.
With these eyes	I have seen you cry. I have seen you try. I have seen the shame.
With these eyes	I have watched you change.
With these hands	I could grow the child. I could calm the fear. I can bring you in,
With these hands	I will hold your place.
With these hands	I can heal the pain I can feel the rain. I can wipe your tears.
With these hands	I can slow the years.



THIS IS NOW

The thing that I like about writing these days
Is that I don't have to write in the usual ways
I can sit here and speak but I sometimes get mad
...When the batteries run out on my new iPad.

I miss the old days when I'd pick up a pen
And write and rewrite and then write again.
There wasn't a need for excess ambition
Because I still hadn't found my voice recognition.

Now I can talk till I'm blue in the face
I just tap the keyboard when I need to erase.
It doesn't seem likely my verse will improve
At least I have iTunes to get in the groove.

I guess I'm part of this new generation
Whose technology created this unreal sensation.
Still I cannot dismiss the memories that linger
When writing was more than just tapping my finger.



YOU'VE GOT THE RIGHT

You've been coming on, baby. You've been coming on so strong.
Everything I say has been coming out wrong.
Yes I get the feeling, baby, I sure understand:
You know you've got the right to go out and find yourself another man.

I tried to make you happy....Give you loving when I could.
You say you think I'm cheating, babe. It's not easy being good.
You know I get the message, baby. I sure understand:
That you got the right to go out and find yourself another man.

There were times that were so pleasing. I never thought they'd go.
When I think about those happy times, there were so many things I did not know.
I have never been misleading ... you know just where I stand.
But I know you got the right to go out and find yourself another man.



FORGIVENESS

How do you forgive the person who is absent when needed most? What charity is there for the person who selfishly thinks only of himself while his friends only ask for a simple sign of support or a nod of acknowledgement? Does time heal the wounds and hide the scars of heart's disappointments? Will you shelve your hurt and pain as you desperately try to rekindle a fire that can never truly warm your spirit? Or will you bury the festering remains of yet another of life's defeats ... while you yearn and search for a glimpse of sympathy or a slice of compassion?

This does not suggest that there is no forgiveness.

Rather, it asks: how does one recover from being mistreated, or heartbroken, as in an empty or violent romance? So afraid of being alone will you wait it out and hope the pain goes away?? Accepting it as inevitable; bravely shouldering life's cruelty? Wearing grief like a badge of courage for all to see; Always the victim?

It's like ... forgiveness is the hope that it will just go away ...but we know it doesn't go away. It keeps getting worse and worse.

Forgiveness is a shield we display when we lose hope
...when our fight has been exhausted.

Forgiveness is never a solution. What it is is a release of burdensome emotional baggage. It is an attempt at finality ... closure. Forgiving another for their relentless, heartless actions or for their deplorable behavior only says they do not have to change ... as if it is our fault that we got hurt.

Maybe it is.

If we continue to allow ourselves to suffer someone's harassments or attacks after they have been forgiven ... time after time ... it surely must be our fault. Maybe we do not have the strength or wisdom to understand that forgiveness is not acceptance. It is only a cleansing action that empowers us to move forward; unfettered.

Forgiveness, on one hand, is an accusation ...and on the other, a confession.

Forgiveness is meaningless ... unless we can also forgive ourselves."



.....

WAITING FOR THE RAIN

When the sky above starts turning grey
And you shiver from the cooling spray
Let the droplets fall where they'll remain
Listen as they call your name
While you're waiting for The Rain.

Do not despair or fear the storm
The clouds will keep your body warm.
The weaknesses you feel today
Will one day all be washed away.

But if the waters come as the flood lines rise
And they just can't cleanse the wounds inside
And the waves come crashing at your door
And you can't keep swimming anymore
And you're just too far away from shore

Turn your head toward horizon's light
Keep the daylight in your sight
Then close your eyes; dream of home again...
Where I'll be waiting for The Rain.

.....

WILL MY LAST ACT be a desperate attempt to thwart the inevitable...?
Will it be a pitiful plea for forgiveness or mercy ... or will my final curtain be a bow to
eternity ... gracefully and humbly exiting after a brilliant and memorable
performance?

.....

THE LEGACY we leave behind ... maybe ... is all we ever truly become.

.....



TEXAS

Just the other day, I got to hear her sing
A song about the blistering heat ... no chance of a relief.

It hadn't rained for weeks. The ground had turned to stone.
As if to make these matters worse,
Her children were all grown;
All living on their own.

I remember once: She seemed so tall and thin
I used to hold her hand in mine To brace her from the wind.

Sought shelter from the storm, it seemed to come and go
Been out there for so long
It seemed a distant friend
Was coming here again

Oh, mamma, where'd your children go?
Been raining for so long
Oh. Momma, where'd your children go?

I remember what she said: she said she'd come for me.
I waited by the open door, I waited patiently.

Now 50 years gone by, the sky is dark again
I found her on a Texas farm
Protected from the wind,
Her walls have closed her in.

Oh, mamma, but where'd your children go?
Been raining for so long
Oh. Momma, where'd your children go?

Momma can't you see ... beyond the memories?
The clouds are fading super fast
This rain will never last.





LISTENIN' MAN

I'm a listenin' man with an ear to the ground.
Can't hear a thing. Don't make a sound
Watching your lips move though I can't hear you speak
Listenin' so hard to you while you're asleep

I'm a listenin' man and I don't have much choice.
I can't hear what you're saying in that whispering' voice.
I will leave in the morning and I'll be on my way
I'll be a listenin' man with no place to stay.

Last time that I heard a word that you said
You were turning your back as I was turning my head
I'm a listenin' man with nothing to say.

I'm a listenin' man so don't tell me twice
You're not being mean but you sure aren't nice.
I've listened to the truth and the lies
I am a listenin' man with nothing to hide.

I'm a listenin' man and I choose what I hear
You can cry all you want and I won't shed a tear
You can keep yourself locked in your room with no doors
No people upstairs. No people below.

I'm a listenin' man. I'm the fly on a wall.
I'm the silence you hear when I won't take your call.
You can say what you want, it's (all) safe with me
I'm the man in the shadows that you'll never see.

Last time that I heard a word that you said
You were turning your back as I was turning my head
I'm a listenin' man with nothing to say.
I'm a listenin' man and I'll be on my way.



GIANTS

It is easy to see the giants. They cannot hide. That is not their calling. They are to stand among the others ... and rise above them."



LOOK AT ME

Look at me; see what I've become
Is this all I have to show for what I've done?
When I tried to change I was asked to leave
The world it seems got the best of me
Look at me and see what I've become

Look at me, see what I've become
Invisible and hidden in my home
Is this emptiness all that's left of me?
Is this who you think I'm supposed to be?
Look at me see what I've become

Look at me; see what I've become
Lost in a shadow of my own
Where nothing's real - nothing's what it seems
Mesmerized by my own extremes
Look at me and see what I've become.

Look at me; see what I've become
Is this all I have to show for what I've done?
I'm so desperate now and I hate to leave,
But before I go, give me one reprieve.
Look at me and see what I have done.



IF I WERE BUT A MOMENT FREE...
Such a dog, I could be!



SLEEP

I will not leave until my work is done.
I will not stop until this task is complete.
I will not change until I can do no more.
I will not turn while the way is clear.
I will not forget what is in my heart.
I will not sleep while you cannot rest.

.....

SOME THINGS WILL NEVER CHANGE

I confess. I'm to blame.
I'm the one who never stays the same.

I'm the culprit. I'm your man.
Pleading guilty I take the stand.

But when it comes to changing facts
There's just so much I can take back.

Some things will never change.
Often things remain the same.
I changed my mind and I changed my name.
Some things will never change.

I'm the driver. The great conniver.
Keeping one eye on the road.
Never turning. Tires burning.
Can't go back to what I used to know.

But when it comes to changing lanes
Sometimes I can't go back again.

Some things will never change.
Often things remain the same.
I changed my mind and I changed my name.
Some things will never change.

I've gotten older; a little bolder
Say the first things that come to mind.
Thinking of you; how much I love you
I stand before you this is all I am.

But if you ever change your mind;
I'm still the man you left behind.

Some things will never change.
Some things remain the same.
I changed my body and I changed my name.
Some things will never change.

SPORTS

I am of the opinion that guns do not kill people. People with guns kill people. It would be a fantasy to think that removing guns from the population would be the solution. I think maybe we should be communicating values and morals and concepts that support positive and loving compassion rather than the commercialization of violence. Oh. And by the way ... I think baseball tennis basketball running jumping skating swimming and volleyball are sports. Stalking and gunning down animals in the wild is not a sport ... It is a thin line that separates the satisfaction of killing defenseless prey under the guise of sport and the ecstasy of slaughtering innocents behind the veil of insanity.

GAMES

How much hatred can there be? How much? What kind of chaos goes through a person's mind to compel them to commit such a heinous act? How can a spirit rationalize and justify actions that result in such devastation and agony? Is this a natural byproduct of a government that defends individual freedoms to the point where those freedoms erode and diminish the qualities of the society they were meant to protect? In her imagination, Shelly's creature acted with specific intent and purpose ignited by fear, revenge, and loneliness. Has our society flipped the switch in the minds of our children with the ultra-violent video games, movies, and the technological display of violence weakly disguised as entertainment? Whom are we to blame when our youth are encouraged to violence by our own greed and ignorance as we extol the glory of war and combat thinly veiled as competition ... sadly promoted as a pathetic man's path to heroism and infamy? Have we created our own monsters with the naïve expectation that they will remain chained and hidden in the darkness?

Written after the Sandy Hook, Ct, Massacre.

WORDS

Words. Those sounds that spew forth to cry the empty stomach or pocket; the everyday utterance making lies and deception from common words.

SONGS

. Those sounds that fly forth to echo the heart or soul; the sweetest melody pleading love and desire out from common ... words.

.....

SNAKEY, THE SNAKE

Snakey, The Snake, was a friend of mine
I used to see him all the time.
He didn't have that much to say
But, I liked to see him anyway.
He dressed real fine, his coat was nice.
I guess that's from his diet: mice.
But I can't find him in the shed,
He must have left; he might be dead.

.....

IN PLAIN SIGHT

Where's the truth to this situation?
Is it hidden by your infatuation?
Is it camouflaged by your fragrant dreams
immersed within your social schemes
asleep behind your tattered chair
(the last place I would look is there.)

Will I find it in the things you do
In the ways you constantly renew
the emptiness within your home, or
the screaming when you're all alone?
I can't discover where it hides.
Can you tell me where the truth resides?

.....





DISTANT BOY

Everyone had to ask me:
What am I going to do
Now that you've gone away?

My baby, don't you see
All the things I've got to be
That make my life complete?

I'm not one of your distant babies.
I'm not one of your distant boys.

Everybody hesitates.
But don't worry I can go
As far as I can see.

Yeah, everybody wants to keep me
So no one ever has to give
Themselves away for free.

I'm not one of your distant babies.
I'm not one of your distant boys.

Lord knows, these times are changing
Folks just don't act the same
Thinking of no one else.

My friends won't try to help me
They think they're just too good
To care about someone else.

I'm not that distant, baby.
I'm not a distant boy.

I'm not your distant baby.
I'm not your distant boy.



VALOR

Valor is not a measure of physical strength nor is it born of furious anger.
Compassion and courage are the banner and shield of true guardians.



FALL WHERE I STAND

There are so many problems ... They fall from the tree
Don't try to ignore them they won't let you be.
You can turn your head ... Try to cover your eyes
They're in your face before you realize.

We are so free.
Like a bird in the hand in the hand who won't leave.
We fight for our right to be free.
I'll fall where I stand. That's just me.

I take to the streets to cover my ground.
Count on me. You know I won't let you down.
I take no prisoners who don't what to fight.
Just send them home 'cause it just isn't right.

We are so free.
Like a bird in the hand in the hand who won't leave.
We fight for our right to be free.
I'll fall where I stand. That's just me.

The road is hard ... push me over the edge.
It's hard to stop me ... Try a bullet to my head.
It ain't that easy getting blood from a stone.
You can take me down ... But I won't go alone.

We are so free.
Like a bird in the hand in the hand who won't leave.
We fight for our right to be free.
I'll fall where I stand. That's just me



IF YOU WILL NOT STAND UP FOR ME
Then stand beside me.
If you will not stand beside me
Then you might stand behind me.
And if you will not stand behind me...
Then I will stand alone.





WHO SHOULD I BELIEVE?
(An Atheist's Prayer)

I was lying by the side of the road begging for a helping hand;
Asking strangers for a sign (without the reprimand.)
Seven saviors came upon me saying "There is no need to grieve"
I said "Thanks for understanding. But who should I believe?"

The river seems so shallow. I could walk across it, too.
I can heal myself so easily. Should I be thanking you?
Will the angels ever come to me and lift me up as I conceive
A fairy tale to help me sleep? Is this what I should believe?

My father left before me with some friends he met along the way.
They blessed themselves with water; then drowned in their dismay.
With silent answers to their prayers their destination undefined,
The holy shepherds held their ground and left them all behind
To wander aimlessly through the rain with nothing left to lose,
Huddled close together in this storm they did not choose.

So forgive us if we have our doubts in a ghost we never see.
UNTil you show us something real ... there's nothing to believe.

Holy killers in the Middle East to glorify your name
Feed their children to the beast. Throw their women on the flame
Crush your temples and the churches; black flags atop the steeple
Slice the tops off of weaker men and subjugate the people.
Let loose their justice in a crowded street, no prejudice do they take.
Their prophet's words are misconstrued to serve their twisted faith.
No devils are they who justify the sadness and the hate.
Then lay themselves at your feet in pieces ... virgins on the wait.

How can you watch what's happening and still expect your due?
This lack of faith is not my choice. How can I trust in you?

There's never been a shred of proof and I'm really not naïve,
But if you won't stop this madness now, don't ask me to believe.



FEAR OF AVALON

I will find you no matter where you hide.
Behind your shadows burning deep inside.
You can't hide yourself from the pouring rain.
Careful not to melt ... away.

I will find you no matter where you stand.
With your tiny, dirty, twisted little hands.
Would you hold me down? Would you laugh at me?
Courage like a stone ... alone.

You can build you wall from end to end.
We'll tear it all apart ... again.

I will find you in the Hall of Shame
As you fantasize to glorify your name.
Will you cherish all your famous friends
from your golden throne?

In a desperate hour when you need someone,
Where have they all gone? Away.



GREEN TURNS TO BLUE

For Mary and Conni

After one night with you
I changed my whole point of view.
Green was becoming blue.

When all was said and done
We did not just stop and run.
Each breath became as one
Holding on.

Living a real romance ... like
Children will learn to dance.
I'm wondering who taught who?

Loving behind a veil
With cloud covers everywhere
I clearly began to see ... what
You mean to me.

Well alright!
I'm trying to explain the way I feel.
Well, alright! ALRIGHT!
That's one thing I'll never change.

There's one thing I know today:
what more is there left to say?
I love you much more each day.

And after each night with you
I still have my point of view.
I am so love with you.

Green becomes my Blue.



GOLDEN DREAMS

Golden Dreams
Where you going to take me now?
Where we going to go, somehow?

Golden Dreams
Take me where I've been before.
I don't want to stay here anymore.

I can't seem to take this pain,
It's killing me.
I can't bear to stay this way.
I just want to be with you again.

Golden Dreams
Why'd you have to go away?
I just want you here with me.

Golden Dreams
Life just doesn't seem the same.
I just have to call your name.

I can't bear to take this pain.
It's killing me.
I can't bear to stay this way.
I just want to be with you again.



A PRAYER FOR OUR FRIENDS

My heart is lifted because we met.
I am blessed to share this life with you and
I am forever grateful for that honor.

I know that you are feeling weak and
I know that you are growing weary.

I pray that you do not quake with fear.
I pray that you do not walk in pain and
I pray that you do not stand alone.

I pray you feel our love.
I pray you travel peacefully and
I pray you are embraced in tenderness.



IN LOVE WITH YOU

This is how I say hello:
Hold you close and won't let go.
This is why I seem so glad
Best love I've ever had.

All I ever want to do
Is spend my time with you.

Never felt like this before.
Can't leave you anymore.
This is what I always knew:
I'm happiest with you.

I'm so much in love you.
Can't you see how much I do?
I'm so much in love with you.
I hope you see how much I do.

And all I really want to say
Is I'm better off this way.
And all I really want to do
Is spend my time with you.

I'm so much in love with you.
Can't you see how much I do?
I'm so much in love with you.
I hope you see how much I do.



TALENT WITHOUT AMBITION
Is like a window that will not open.



BLUES

Well ...one should not over-complicate what is meant to be otherwise. Blues is a reference to hard work, good and bad love, good and bad breaks ...things that went wrong (mostly) and the plea to god to help us endure the endless struggle. The "mostly" implies that things can go right, too. Blues is not always a lamentation ...it also signals jubilation and salvation. It's the story of life ...it's continuous changes ...and our determination and resolve to see it through.



BY THE WAY

I like to take some chances – sometimes I even fail
I also have a lawyer friend who keeps me out of jail

I like to keep his number – posted by the door
I've only had to use it once before.

Sometimes you got to pay – by the way

Who was I kiss you – you hardly knew my name
I couldn't help myself you see – so I kissed you just the same.

Who am I to wonder – wonder what's in store
I'd like to kiss with you a little more.

What else can I say – by the way?

You came to me like I was waiting to be rescued.
I failed to see. I made believe that I was sleeping
But I knew. You know I do.

Who am I to stop you or beat you when you're down?
I shouldn't be allowed to speak if I won't stick around.

Who am I to hold you and keep you locked inside
At least you know I gave it a good try.

There's nothing left to say, by the way.



.....
SHE'S GONE

Don't wake me up
It's too much to deal with; I've had enough.
It's better to leave me alone.

Just let me be.
Just let me forget what she meant to me.
I can't face the truth anymore.

She's gone.

If I wake up now, she's gone.
If I wake up now, she's gone.

I don't really sleep.
I wake up each morning and feel so weak.
I can't get her out of my head.

The light hurts my eyes.
I dimly remember a better time.
I just want to go back to bed.
Because I don't dream.
I don't feel a thing.
The emptiness clouds over me.

When I feign sleep.
I fall in so deep.
I try, but she's just out of reach.

She's gone.

If I wake up now, she's gone.
If I wake up now, she's gone.

If I wake up now and turn around,
If I wake up now, she's gone.

.....
SLICES

There are times ...tiny slices of the ordinary ...when we glimpse an unexpected
moment that startles our inner eye. We are frozen in awe ...and powerless to forget
...the art of our world and of our time.
How sad it is that so many go through their tiresome lives
without ever "seeing" those life-treasures.



WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

If I could sail away
Then I won't have to stay,
Then I could be free.

If I could turn the tide,
The long, hard loneliness
might help to set me free.

Where are you now? You were right there beside of me.
Where are you now? I feel you inside of me.

(I can't agree.
I can't for the life of me.)

The times I spent with you.
You made my dreams come true.
You were the light of my life.

I see you everywhere.
The shadows remind me the truth is behind me
But won't set me free,

Where are now? You were walking beside of me.
Where are you now? The truth is a lie to me.

(I can't agree.
I can't for the life of me.)



DESPERATE

They try so desperately to hold onto the past. What is it that they fear? Is it the helplessness of the present ...or the hopelessness of the future?



SEASONS

Seasons change too frequently.
Summer's coming way too soon.
Can't wait for June.
Looking forward to a springtime moon,
Like the time that we first met.

I saw you standing on the street.
The boulevard looked oh so sweet.
You captured me.
Locked the door and threw away the key.
Life just hasn't been the same.

You took my hands and you took my heart.
You took my life from the very start.
You took the time to discover me.
Life just hasn't been the same.

I think we make a perfect team.
You're so beautiful it's hard to see,
Why you love me.
How can I give you what you've given me?
All I know is I love you.

I really do.



LETTER TO RICK HOFFMAN ON THE DEATH OF HIS DOG, HARLEY

I feel so bad for you. It's a terrifying decision to make but when you know he is suffering and there is no hope ... you must do the right thing. We did it two years ago with Wendy and ... although I continue to believe it was the right thing to do ... me, personally ... I weaken every time I recall our final moments together ... as I am sure you will, too ... but Rick, you did do the right thing for your friend ... and try to look back at the great life you shared and maybe ... maybe you will open your heart and home to another who needs the love and compassion you shared with Harley.

My thoughts are with you as I think of the beautiful animals who still, after so many years, mean so much to me... and how, as I sit alone weeping for our mutual losses... I take a small bit of solace for the sweet memories I have and the relief that there are more to come.



OLLIE

What were you saying when you caught my ear?
There was so much excitement I could hardly hear.
There was screeching and shouting
Which way should I turn?
And a familiar voice that I could not discern.

The ground was slipping from beneath my feet
As I glimpsed the big sky blue.
My mind was spinning; I felt weightless.
Then I crashed to earth wondering
What I'm going to do.

All I remember is your distant plea.
The one thing I still sometimes hear.
So, what were you trying to tell me?
What were you saying
When you caught my ear?



FREEDOM

Do not be so swift to persecute every public office
by revealing every thought, every word, or every action.

Patriotism, honor, and loyalty are a shared responsibility
and are not the sole charges of our brave military ...

nor is the battlefield the sole arena.

Every citizen of this country has the moral and civil obligation
to defend this nation by upholding the tenets of its
Constitution, respecting the sanctity of its national security,
and observing the boundaries of our laws and socially acceptable practices.

By all means speak out your opinions and proclaim your oppositions ... freedom
provides you that entitlement ...

but, do not infect this good society with hatred, insurrection, or tyranny.





PEACEFUL MAN

My father was a peaceful man.
Did the "dad thing" the best he can.
Tried to keep up
And make a living.

He lived his life like a single man;
Played the ponies with his friends.
But he was always there
When I'd really need him.

Not a perfect world
But I still got to see him.

He tried to cut some corners short
But it didn't work out like he thought.
He paid the price of the
Broken hearted.

When we were young my parents split.
My mom took off but he kept the kids.
I could see on his face he felt that
He was beaten.

Like it was all his fault
And he never was forgiven.

Well, lots of folks say I look like him.
That's all right; we were the best of friends.
When I think back now I see that
We looked quite familiar.
Because the lives we lived were
Oh, so similar.



MISTAKE

The biggest mistake we can make is believing that the future begins tomorrow. We have spent our entire lives getting to this point. Now is the time for us to shine. These moments belong to us. What we do now... from this point forward... will define who we are and why we are here.

NO ONE'S PERFECT

I'm not lazy. I don't want a job.
Just can't be one of those working slob.
Can't rely on me because I'm always late.
No one's perfect, Baby ain't it great?

I fool around and think that life's a joke.
Spend more money than I have. I'm broke.
Don't criticize me 'cause I'm not like you.
No one's perfect. Baby, ain't that true?

I smoke too much; I think I'm gaining weight.
Can't get up early 'cause I stay out late.
I'm no one special and I'm sure you agree
That no one's perfect; baby just like me.

I would rather hang around in bars.
Ride my Harley; drive my fancy cars.
My friends all understand the reasons why
No one's perfect; baby so am I.

LIVING IN SILENCE

Oft I wonder if Eyes do watch,
If ever there was someone interested in us.
If Ears can hear the pleas and moans
Of painful sufferers or splintered bones.
If Voices guide us through deadly roads,
Our daily tortures and heavy loads.
Will heaven's reach grasp us by our arms
To rescue us from imminent harm?

Do we spend our days toiling aimlessly?
For naught we struggle if none will see
What scratchings we leave like festered mice
In a worthless existence, this ... paradise.
Is there Someone who pities our futile plight
Who blesses our horrors with their holy might?
Or are we like insects ... vermin or swine
With nothing forward ... and nothing behind?

WINTER

I close my eyes so I can see your face
It comes to me from out of nowhere.
A faint outline and then your eyes,
Your long gold hair, and then your smile.

It's so dark when I close my eyes.
Is it dark for you as well?
Do you see me like I see you?
Do you feel the way I do?

Is your heart heavy with sadness?
Does it crush you like a winter storm?
I feel buried under the evening snow
And I can't feel a thing.

All I can do is close my eyes
And hope to see you again.





IF MY CAT COULD SING

If my cat could sing, Oh, what a joy,
The sounds would be so sweet.
He'd sing real loud and look at me,
So I could keep the beat.

I could sing along with my little friend,
(Sometimes we sound the same).
We could raise our heads and stretch our necks
To echo the refrain.

If my cat could sing I'd pick him up
And dance around the room.
It'd be so nice to have a cat
Who really liked to croon.

I'll bet the dog would bark and yelp,
She'd want to sing along.
She'd try real hard to sing the words
But always get them wrong.

The words are strange, some silly, too.
That doesn't mean a thing.
We sing because we like the song,
We sing because we sing.

Now-a-days, the time goes by,
It's quiet here at home.
I just can't seem to find the heart
To sing our songs alone.

Oh, my little cat,
I think I hear you singing all the time.



TREASURES

There are times ...tiny slices of the ordinary ...when we glimpse an unexpected moment that startles our inner eye. We are frozen in awe ...and powerless to forget ...the art of our world and of our time. How sad it is that so many go through their tiresome lives without ever "seeing" those life-treasures.



THE PARTY'S OVER

Now that it's over tell me just how you feel.
Was it all you expected and just how you thought it would be?
You're much too hard on yourself, you know, it wasn't that bad.
It was the greatest time that you ever had ...

But now it's over. The party's over.

When you woke up this morning did you remember the time
You danced on the tables and you drank too much wine?

You gave it all that you had just to save yourself.
You acted out so loud with nobody's help.

And now it's over ... the party's over.

You want to dance all night but your friends have all gone
And the tears that you cry are just memories of things that went wrong.

(I can still hear you crying.)
It's time to get some sleep

(I can still hear you crying.)
It's time to get some sleep

Now that it's over tell me just how you feel.
Was it all you expected and just how you thought it would be?

You're gonna wake up lonely and won't have much on.
You won't remember the name of the man you brought home.

And then it's over ... the party's over.



"LIKE SCARS, THE YEARS SLOWLY FADE."

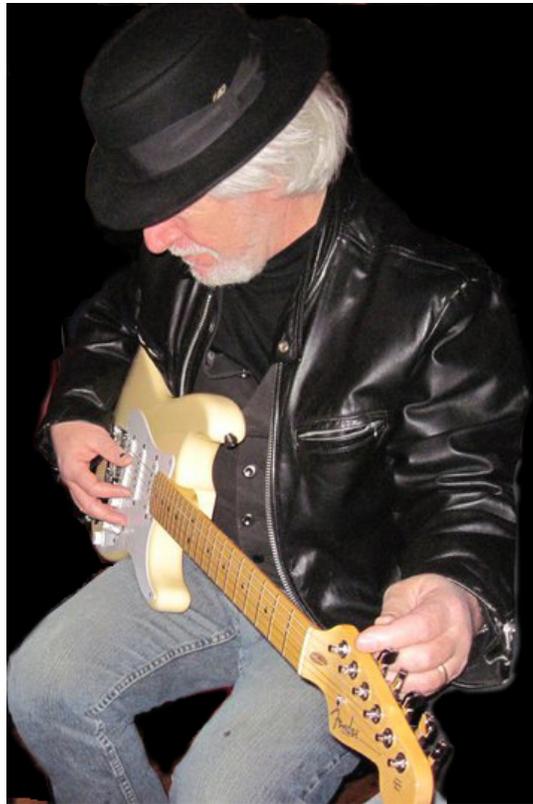


THICK & THIN

I will never forget
We were always more than friends.
Though we went our separate ways
I remember where we're from.

Stayed in touch through all these years
Watched our loved ones disappear
Some things weren't always said
Even after such a long time.

After all that we've been through
I'm still looking up to you
Of all the people that I knew
I'm so very proud of you.



.....

AVERAGE GUY

I have to get something off my chest.

You know ... I'm an average kind of guy living an average kind of life I guess. I like to sleep late ... I hate working out ... I shop at the mall ... love my dogs ... I keep my paper money in the left pocket and coins in the right. Just an average guy ... Meat and Potatoes.

Now there's nothing wrong with that because no one expects anything special from an average guy ... I keep plodding along ... doing average things. I don't rock the boat or do anything that will stand out.

I heard a quote the other day from Andy Rooney: "The average dog is a nicer person than the average person." Thanks, Andy. That's encouraging.

Now the thing about being above average is - Everyone does expect something - special. Hit a longer golf ball. Make a lot more money. Have nicer hair. Drive nicer cars. You all know the type. Us average guys could never be like them. The pressure is too much. We just can't be above average on a consistent level - like those guys. They're the ones who walk - *no, no, parade* - into the bar and - we shake our heads and say to ourselves - *"Great! Now I get to feel a little smaller than usual and no one's gonna pay any attention to me and just look at what I'm wearing, and ... on and on."* What are ya gonna do?

*Well, I'll tell you what I'm gonna do! I'm gonna walk up to this guy - look him straight in the eyes - and - buy him a drink! That's right. Then I get to hang around with him for a little while and people will see us together and maybe they'll say - *"Hey look! Phil's hanging with - "Chad" - maybe Phil's not as average as I thought he was!"**

Then there's the two of us standing around - you know, with me trying to look above average ... chatting about above average things - and of course "Chad" doesn't hear a word I'm saying - he's looking over my shoulder for another above average guy to bail him out. Let me tell you something: It's a sick, vicious cycle.



(Average Guy continued)

But ... thankfully for us average guys the natural balance of things tips in our favor
once in a while.

Just when we're feeling a little down with our average lives, like nothing's ever
gonna change ... like everything's going to stay the same *for ever*, just when we
feel like giving up... along comes ... *out of the misty fog of inferiority -- like a cloud
on a sunny day* ... you guess it! ... *a below average guy!*

He's got worse hair than me. He's got worse clothes. He's shorter than me. He's
fatter than me. And ... maybe ... *just maybe* ... if there's any justice in this life at all
... he'll manage to stumble in my general direction ... stare blindly into my eyes ...
and ... (chuckle) buy *me* a drink. Wouldn't that be something!

Maybe that's what they mean by: When you're average, you're just as close to the
bottom as you are the *top*.

Thanks. I feel better.



WAITING

When I close my eyes
Little slits that they'd be
If I look real hard
I sometimes can see

Out there past the woods
Past the hedges and vines
Past the oaks and magnolias
Past the maples and pines

In the field past the river
'Neath the shade of that tree
Where once we would settle
My Golden and me.

If I hold back my flooding
So I see through the glare
I could swear that I see her
Waiting for me out there.

I LOVE YOU

There's a confidence that beholds me,
Even though I have nothing.
There's a knowledge I possess,
Even though I am down.
And just as the night,
I've got my day.
And just as the Dark,
I have my light.
And just like a tear,
I have my grin.
And just like the turmoil,
I have my peace.
Yes, just like the Dark,
I have my light.
Shine on! Dear Child!
Shine on!

FROM FRUSTRATION COMES INGENUITY





LOVELY

Is it not wonderful the change of life to come,
From lonely and forgotten,
To someone to become?
From tears and pain and back again,
And lost without a hope,
to sheer delight and a winning light
And a life well worth to cope.
And you and I might walk from here,
But going where . . . who can say?,
As long as it's a place where we,
Can be along our way.
And the world can turn, and die and burn,
and crush itself to dust,
Then we will cry, and then we'll turn,
And do just what we must.
Never let the past become
a thing that shadows now,
Let us live from day to day,
And let us find out how.



A LITTLE MORE TIME

Man cries for just a few more hours, just a little more time, while he condemns the
world more and more with each minute of his existence,

And the world has cried for just one more chance,
And we've had three world wars already ... now we're on the moon.

And the world loves great men and we praise them for what they've done to make
the world a better place in which to live.

Lincoln, Kennedy, King ... Lincoln, Kennedy, King.



BAD HABITS

You can stop drinking, smoking, doing drugs ...carrying on., cussing ...staying out
all night ...and being a crazy son of a bitch. You can stop doing all of those things
but it won't change a thing about you. Your bad habits are not what made you
who you are. That came from within. If you want to change your life
That's what you have to change.

.....

LIMITATIONS

As the world differs so men come closer together, so does his ends of knowledge. It is very difficult to understand knowledge. As man seeks more knowledge, his limitations are forever widening. What was sufficient before is petty and useless now. As one man needs to see more, he looks down on the man who has seen enough.

The truth is that one man's future might be another man's fate.

How can man, the individual, ever hope to stop at another's goal? Man cannot be satisfied if he is another's equal. He must always be better than the next. This is the ever-changing world wherein man's striving for new accomplishments means the face of the Earth would never stay the same.

For as each day passes, something new has been created.

.....

MEN

How can we determine,
What makes men fall,
When most of them are shadows,
Which are nothing at all?

.....

SPEECH

How often we choose not to speak when we believe our words will have no meaning. How often we choose not to speak for our words may cause pain or sorrow. How often we choose not to speak when our words may be lost in the wind or become stifled by the storm.

Does our voice roar and echo through the canyons of fear?
Or is it hidden in a shadow of cowardice; behind a grimace of shame?

Do we clench our teeth to hold back our screams of injustice or our pleas for mercy?
Are we choking on our calls for peace and compassion?
If we hold back our signals of defiance and cease to confront the hypocrites and manipulators are we not as guilty as those we protest?

.....

LOVE

All my love
Let it be given to you
All that is mine
Deliver to you
Love eternal
Fragrance stronger
A will to survive to strive for happiness
Knowing sadness
Believing in joy
Contentment and security
A peaceful power
Unity
Thankful
Love

.....

DISGUISE

Though you live for today, you just can't forget,
The things that you are and the things you will be.
And that mystic shawl that you wear 'round your neck,
Hides the pain and sorrow that you don't want to see.

.....





YOU'RE ALWAYS WELCOME HERE

You're always welcome here my friend
When your journey's at an end
There will always be a place for you
There will always be some time for you
We're holding out our hands for you.
You're always welcome here, my friend.

There is always a familiar face
Someone to offer an embrace
There will always be your friends for you
They will always take a stand for you
There is nothing that they would not do
You're always welcome here, my friend.

There will always be an open door
No matter what you've done before.
There will always be a burning fire
To keep you warm when you are tired.
There will always be an empty chair.
You're always welcome here, my friend.

You'll always have a place to rest
To take the burden off your chest
A place to let your feet touch ground
A place to shelter you from harm
A place to keep you safe and warm
You're always welcome here, my friend.

A place to go where you belong
A place to go when things go wrong
A place to come in from the cold
A place to go when you get old
A place that you can call your home.
You're always welcome here, my friend.

Will you bring your stories? Fairy tales?
Did you chart your path with tattered sails?
Did you think that there'd be no one here?
Did you still believe we would not care?
Did you look ahead with vacant stares?
There will always be a bed to share.
You're always welcome here, my friend.



THE SINGER

I close my eyes
I see a shadow passing by.
Moved so soft ...now it's gone.

I heard a sound.
A whisper in my ear.
I turned around but it's gone.

It's something like a dream come true.
It really sounds a lot like you.
If I could wish for just one thing.
(I'd) like to hear you sing. (2x)

You seemed so small.
You laughed just like a child.
Running wild ...like a flower.

I look around.
I can hear it in the air.
I can't stop feeling you're here.

it's something like a dream come true.
It feels a lot like you.
If I could wish for just one thing.
I'd like to hear you sing.

WHAT WILL WE LEARN?

Shall we watch them as they hobble by
and pass them flowers...watch them die?
Will we hold their hands as they start to fall
Or leave them lying on the floor?

Will we run with them as they run amok
Or hold them down and close them shut?
Will we see the world as they see so clearly
Or close our eyes to what we should hold dearly?

.....
You

Contact your feelings and tell them where you really are.
Tell them you want to gather your thoughts,
Tell them you would rather die than fail,
Make them realize that it is hard.

Tell them that you can do it, (and you really can; if you would just do it!)
It's not as difficult as you might think it is,
Don't put more problems in front of yourself,
Even though you can make your way around them.
Find yourself first, and then you'll see
That you might see yourself in me.

.....
LETTER TO FRANK & BARBARA ON THE DEATH OF THEIR DOG, HARLEY

Barbara and Frank

I was so sad after Eva told me about Harley.
We both wish we had known sooner.

We can imagine how you both still feel ... having lost a loved one who was so special. Our companions mean so much to us, they become integral parts of our lives, and the thought of living without them can, at times, be too much to bear. The emptiness and sorrow seems to fill our hearts and we sometimes don't know which way to turn ... every room speaks their names, every day seems a bit more lonely.

Your love for Harley, and the commitment you made to give him a good life, will keep him in your hearts forever. I believe Harley will still be with you ... maybe watching over you... barking every time you try to leave him.

So, every now and then ...when the silence falls, softly call out his name.

Sincerely ... Phil and Eva

It seems like an eternity since I lost my little girl, Katie. I grieve and miss her every day. I wrote poems and songs so that I could always go back to those exact moments.

I also remember how supportive you were at the time and I won't forget. P

COMPARISON

A pretty girl, a sheer delight,
Shining with the morning light,
And Evening glows a stormy might,
She'll be alone, a losing fight.

And the lovely day;
Can't forever stay,
Just to be at bay,
Does as it may.

Do as you would,
Do as you could,
Do what you should,
It just might be good.

While Peace and Tranquility,
Refuse to respond to me,
So I will cry unendingly,
To show that I can human be.

YESTERDAY

Yesterday's problems still pend,
Though man's diluted reasoning has found its end.



.....

TRUTH

No man can explain the things he calls insane yet,
We still call a fellow man the fool.
And we still condemn a slave,
and we still betray our own when we don't understand,
and we still can't believe when we're shown there is no other way,
And we still look deeper, even though our eyes forbid it.
We still shout wisdom while acting the part of the fool,
and we still ask when we have not the need,
We still greet the well yet shun the unfortunate,
and we still believe we know.
We still can't accept the truth of the matter,
we look for holes when we fall into pits,,
We still love the whole world yet we can't love one another,
and we still try to do our best, when we fail when we do our worst,
We still say we are independent but we can't function
until someone is standing by,
And we still pray to Almighty God when we lose with the almighty dollar,
We still call ourselves right and the others are wrong,
We still cry for peace and laugh at victories.
We still doubt the next man
but we would rather ask him than take it upon ourselves,
We still want to live but we stay uneasy,
We still want our riches but we never want to work, yet,
No man can explain the things he calls insane.

.....

ANTHEM

Yes. It is hard sometimes to keep going when it seems that each new day brings yet another round of hurt and pain ... sadness and despair. Where do we get the strength and power to wake each morning with any sense of optimism or faith ... anticipation or hope ... when it all seems so pointless ... so exhausting? What anthem can we chant as we trudge through seemingly endless failures and disappointments? What is the fuel that powers our dreams and energizes our spirit?
It is love.

Love.

The eternal bright light. The everlasting gleam of encouragement. Love is our banner and shield. Love is the mighty stallion that carries us ... charging steadfast through the frenzy and chaos. We move steadily forward, sails billowed by love, against the winds of challenge with clarity of sight: eager for adventure. It is love that lifts us up and fills our hearts with compassion and devotion.

REDS

They've taken all my money;
Choked the breath right out of me
Still they stand before me
I can't stand the sight of them

beat me when I'm down;
my throat won't make a sound.
lying to my face.
they're such a big disgrace.

Well, you can see that I'm still here.

I cant tell the lies
I would never let you down

from the truth inside
as long as I'm around.

You worked to make a living
You never had a decent job
You struggled with your money
You banked on empty promises

they worked you to the bone
or had a decent home
you never had a dime
that failed you every time

Well now's the time for you to say:

I will never fall
And I will never let you down

never run away
as long as I'm around.

Have you fallen out of favor
Was something missing from your life
Will spirits of your childhood
Will the rusty ruins of later times

as the weaklings pass you by?
that always made you cry?
be there when you call
support you when you fall?

You can see that I'm still here.

A beacon in the night;
Someone who you can call to
I would never let you down

a light to guide you home
when you're feeling all alone
as long as I'm around.

Someone to fill the void.
I cant stand beside you when my

Your kids admired you
feet wont touch the ground

March across my empty grave
Clashing with the enemy

Step by step in time
holding the front lines

They told you they would help you
Someone who you can come to

weather through the storm
when you're feeling all alone.

They'd bring your sons and daughters
I can't tell the lies
I will stand up tall and
I will take this punishment

home for one more day
from the truth inside
never run away.
my back against the wall

.....

HOW CAN I?

Fortunes large and mighty can't dissolve what has been established.
Only man's most primitive being is there to enable him
To preserve whatever nobility he possesses.

This feeling of self-pride, which is pseudo, to him is of great importance.
No matter how I define his lack of success, I, too am destined to
fall victim to my own failures.

How can I, the newborn Redeemer,
In my own eyes, perform so as not to be a spectacle
in the eyes of my fellow man?

How can I, in a subtle way,
Be an outstanding figurehead?
How can I, a lonely, menial, mortal,
Become more god-like in my own right?

.....





INSIDE OUT

The door is closed but I can see through a window shade.
You're standing there on the inside.
It's getting cold. I shiver out here all alone.
I'm waiting here on the outside.

On the outside.

You seem to think because I was born on a different street,
We'd have no chance together.
Though I come to you with a different point of view,
We're both the same on the inside.

On the inside.

(We're hanging on your every word)

Whisper in my ear your plans to get a way from here.
Will you run with me on the outside?

On the outside.

Don't be afraid of the choices that you've made.
They'll all work out on the outside.
I took some time to tell the world that you'd be mine,
Here with me ... together.

Together.



OUT IS OUT

Everyone of us is guilty at one time or another ... relishing in the glee of "getting away with it" ... bending the rules, paying cash to avoid taxes, skimming a little off the top, taking a little something extra because ... well, we deserve it.

But it doesn't really matter where you step out ... out is out.

People – some people – within each and every socio and/or economic class are convinced their individual predicament justifies their "need" to break the law ... whether it's the banker who embezzles or the mother who shoplifts. And while no government is without its flaws or renegades, a citizen's conscious and actionable desire to live within the framework of a civil, social, and enduring society will almost always ensure protection from inappropriate law enforcement..

.....

BOUNDARIES

Truth and false, yes and no, right and wrong
Extremes, extremes, life is full of extremes.

Ignorance and intellect, wealthy and poor, happy and sad,
Friendly and mad.
Sane and Insane.
Why can't life be a little simpler???

Instead of having good and bad, why can't there just be good ... or bad?
If there was just bad then there wouldn't be any good.

Which means there would be no bad, because bad would be everything; bad
would be good, mediocre, repulsive, energetic, horrifying.

There would be nothing else but bad.

There would no other Extreme to reach.

.....

SAVIOUR

"Are you searching for a saviour? Are you waiting for a god to come?
Someone who will forgive you of everything you've done?"

.....



.....

AN UNDERSTANDING

Try to understand me now, as I speak to you defined.
Is it just your freedom or do you also want mine?
I know that you prefer to do just as you please,
You play with what's reality, and what's not, you drop with ease.

I see you cry unendingly, and I try to make you see,
The world's a great, big forest and we're all just lonely leaves.
I'll see you in Eternity, and see you in the End, as we
Free the well-fed partisans, and capture all their friends,

Fortunes from an empty world, not spent on Time's refuse,
And you and I can't make us love, so tell me ... "what's the use?"
Time's an everlasting loop that ends where it begins,
Love is more than kissing you and saying stupid things.

So you ask me where to start this trip, and where it's leading to,
You question how it's going to look and what it's looking through.
You scream and cry, and dare defy, you can't believe your ears,
When I say "Love is more than happiness; it's pain, joy, and fears."

There is wonder and astonishment on your face as you decline.
It appears the love you gave me was not the honest kind.
This explains your apprehension and justifies your emotional door.
Maybe someday we find our love. Of this, one can't be sure.

.....

LONELINESS

a state of mind that cannot be shared.

.....

CHOICE

It's a wall.

You can either stand there and look at it,

Or you can pick up a hammer.



LIFE

Life is what you make it, and not what it makes of you, yet still I fear the growing of old. When not within my mind, if I die, I believe, my friend, that Death is a poor escape from the torments of life. No matter what I seek, I am on my guard, and I never let my mind take full control over my emotions, for if this should happen, only the Heavens would appreciate what my thoughts are, and my successes would be unknown, for I will no longer be of this world.

I seek, and shall continue to seek, answers no matter what odds are played against me. For my will to survive and my great need for knowledge is my formula for undying life. Without these self-set demands, my purpose here would be meaningless. And to all those who would search channels of time with me, come along, and we shall do what is in our hearts. And to all those who would try to defeat our purpose, let them set their wills to the test, for the mind cannot compete with the heart. For in the mind lies the knowledge of danger and conquest, while in the heart, is the courage that can drive any man towards any danger The heart possesses the will to win. There is no test between the knowledge and the will. Without the will to learn, man would not learn, and without the courage to survive, man would die. So play these words in your mind and think carefully. Before you start this journey, be sure that your heart precedes your brain by two steps.



FOR SARAH

For wanderers seeking - yet to find
A meaning for life - left behind.
Run to catch - but never to keep.
The future's bold. No time to weep

Over things been done and words all said
Believe in now and don't regret
The things to come though hard they seem
Life is Love. Love is Life. What does it mean?

To conquer your foes and be what you want
Live in your castle: Triumphant.
And feel all your feelings and try not to fall
Because, life is for living. And living is all.





IMAGE

Mirror, mirror on the wall
Tell me all I want to know
There's a face that all I see
Is laughing, screaming, right at me.

Pain! Yeah! That's not me!
Every time I look into that glass
There's no telling how long I'll last.
And every time I look into those eyes
I'm not shocked when I see my disguise.

Find some truth in what I see,
There aint no harm in being me.
Laughing, screaming, and seeming strong!
Don't look at my image and tell me I'm wrong.



WAKING UP

Morning cries out to me in the stillest way,
Night has taken its leave and I am not to worry, for I take my own leave and am not
to blame for the poor way that Dawn takes control over the Eve.
This is the time that I can say:
"Dearest Death, the throws that possess me have me in tears,
Because I cannot explain the remorse that has overtaken me.
Sweet Tears take me over. I wish to fall subject to the comforting pains that
accompany you. The gentle sigh that follows is the satisfaction I long.
Sweet Peace overtakes me."



.....
KNOWING WHEN TO STOP

I think it's time to move on.
The carnage of the past has caught up
and will go no further.
Cease the stabbing, pushing,
Pulling, tearing.
The crying and the screaming,
The finger-pointing.
It is as dead as dead it will be.

It lies crushed and defeated.
Hardly a breath left to breathe
Or a pulse weakened beat.
So little harm here left for anyone.
Abandon it not ...
It has work yet to complete.
Many things destroyed rebuild.
Many wounds opened close.

.....
EQUALITY

Equality is a nice achievement across all ethnic economic religious or gender ... a good win for any civilized society. And although there are so many issues and problems that need to be addressed ...big serious complex issues ... we should take a deep fulfilling breath of pride and accomplishment for having taken a big step forward ... If not for us as individuals ... better for us as good people.

THE FATE

Now here I stand, with my blood drenched hands,
My fate does fit my Sin,
A broken heart and a troubling mind,
Is cast with me, locked in.

A young girl broke, so tenderly.,
At first it seemed undone,
But later followed Agony,
With Misery yet to come.

Yes, I'm to blame. Yes, I confess,
To taking' what was not mine.
A virgin's prize, that now is missed,
And now I'm losing mine.



.....
TYMOR PARK

I am driven by the winter. Ice on my skin . . . Ice in my hair. My feet crunch through the frozen snow. I am walking with friends who speak gently and softly. They take me on a journey to the fields, where the birds fly in wide circles and the wolves run wild. The sky is overwhelmed with clouds and the trees embrace each other to fight the cold. I wipe the frost from my face and eyes to better see this vision as I am led along trampled walk ways around and up the hill. I'm compelled to march with short steps more left and right than forward to keep from losing my stance. My shortness of breath stalls me but briefly as I imagine why I'm here. I can't remember ever being anywhere else. I should have worn warmer gloves. The tips of my fingers are numb. My companions turn silent and offer no explanation for the numbing cold, as if there was never anything else. As if the bitterness was always there. Glancing at them, I wonder if they feel the same. Do their bundled fingers hurt like mine? Have they become immune to the harsh elements? Without knowing, the hilltop is beneath me. The air has become deafening with its emptiness and I am alone. Where have my guides escaped? Why have they left me? Spinning around, the tree tops blur and the horizons fall further into the distance. The sun has fallen to dusk. No sounds. No souls. My legs become soft rubber. I close my eyes and fall to my knees, sobbing. Something has surfaced from deep inside that I thought was gone . . . a memory and a feeling. I grimace to bring the experience in more clearly but can only recognize small slices of it. Blocking out the outside world I assembled the pieces into an incomplete picture, and I was able to roughly discern the image of my lost friend, Katie. Katie is walking through the trees, her golden coat blending in with the summer's foliage. Intermittent slivers of sunshine contrast the dark green forest and spotlight her luscious fur, as if she was a movie starlet, snaking through crowds of admirers. She stops every so often to see if I am still watching. *(cont.)*

Of course, I am. Her dark eyes telling me, speaking to me from the dense: "I cannot come to you now, but I am here with you. I hear you when you call my name, but I cannot come to you, now." She sniffs the ground, and noses the shrubs. Her tail is like a fiery flag following her every step. I narrow my stare to track her as she winds through the brush. Here and there, she disappears. I call her, but she cannot come to me, now. She has wandered off and I am again, alone . . . I feel wasted and drained, and weakly get to my feet. The chill has returned and the hours have passed. The sky is black, spotted with speckled light. The birds have nested and the wolves have begun their nightly hunt. Lunar light edges the rock hard path and the trees have become a curtain, framing the way back down the hill. My steps become heavy as the descent pulls me back to the fields. I can hear the voices of my friends as their forms emerge from the shadows and they are calling my name . . . gently offering to take me back . . . to the winter.

.....

VACILLATIONS AND UNTITLED WORKS

To my feelings, with the deepest regrets:

I wish to inform you that I will no longer be subject to the remorse and other odd
and feeble changes that go along with the accepting of your presence.

There is no way that I will again be the slave to your wishes, and the penalties that
will be bestowed upon you will most outrageous and more horrid that can ever be
dropped on any condemned.

.....

FOR SECURITY I PAY THE PRICE
For life I meet the demands set
For love I die and form again
For joy I search until I'm met.

For friends I do what I'd want for me
For talk I listen to other minds
For thought I think beyond my scope
For peace I sing along with rhyme.

For fear I fight and try to win
For rest I sleep and start again
For beauty I just turn to you
For me I do what I must do.

.....

IF I COULD BUT ETERNAL LIVE,
I'd find out I cannot,
Ever sense the gift of give,
For it's given me a lot.

.....

AS I FORM ENORMOUS TALES, OF GAILY GILDED PARKS,
I remember paths and unlit trails, and walking in the dark.

This proves to me a mindless void to set up every time,
An everlasting passing boy, and his past life was mine.

.....

OH SWEET PEACE I LONG TO SEE and taste the fruits you bear
how can I live and never give and still believe you're there.

Though you haunt me for all time it seems you jump at me too soon
I imagine that you sing my song but always change the tune.

I've tried to catch you frequently ... At times I almost did
And slipping out into the night I sought out where you hid.

.....

NOW IT'S CLAIMED THROUGHOUT THIS WAR TORN LAND
That soon in fact you'll be,
All along you've been beside my soul ...
I'm too blind to see.

.....

THERE HAVE BEEN TIMES THAT I CAN RECALL
They sure seemed big, but really, they were small.
I cannot find the reasons why
I believe we'll find them if we try.

I've got you to depend upon
You've got me - that has never gone.
They say we fell but I say we've grown
Just ask around the people that we've known.

The way is hard I know we'll last
We've got more than those with just one chance.
And now and then you'll cry a tear
But keep in mind I'll always hold you near.

I've been a fool so many times
I've taken love and fouled the rhymes.
The song's still there though out of key
The words still mean my love's from me.

I sometimes sit and contemplate
And think of life; the pleasures we make.
And I still regret the things I do
But you've got me, and baby ... I've got you.



Is there the FORMULA OF THE MIND and the solution for the mindless?
People tend to erase from their minds the frightening experiences of life, but to no avail. My beliefs are that if a person wishes to eliminate a bad thought (or feeling) he must learn first how to accept that thought as only being a thought, and to understand it thoroughly. In the event of the thought returning, go back and look again to know if you have truly seen all there is to see ... for if you miss one small part of the picture, it is incomplete.



IN EVERY LIGHT I seemed to see
A knowingness that evolved 'round you
A thoughtfulness that seemed to be
Eternal and forever true
And everything that meant to me,
Was everything; which seemed like you.



THE ONLY PHILOSOPHY that can ever be of use to man is that which states:
I, in my own existence, must set aside my hopes from my dreams. I must keep dreaming my dreams and do no more with them. I must keep striving for the fulfillment of my hopes. In this reality, will I ever succeed."



WHILE IN THE MIDST OF INTERNAL TURMOIL
I chanced to see
A fountain blooming lightning
And a mirror showing me.

And in the shape of a mountain's crest
A million feelings felt
A happiness not meant to be
Until the snow had melt.

The realization came to past
The shock was that it's true
The more I cry; The more I die
The more that I need you.

.....

MUCH TOO OFTEN I SIT AND SIGH,
For now is forever, for you and I
And suitors cannot voice their praise
On children with their powers raised,
To be unheard is to be disturbed,
And to sit and cry as all time travels by.
In every beginning there is an end,
As tomorrow finds solitude, yesterday finds a friend,
As sequence finds order, and life finds a trend,
So does the straightest also bend?
Love can't remember and time can't foresee,
Cannot distinguish to follow or flee,
And it's relaxing to fight for what is to be,
It's unheard of, so we must wait and see.
While trying to decipher the things of the past,
Remember we all can't be saved in one mass.

.....

IS LIFE TO BE PLAYED WITH AS DIE ON THE BOARD?
Or, does it not matter which edge of the sword?
Get resolved what we noticed, and not what we missed,
Together they praise us yet divided dismissed.
Forgetting the sermon ... remembering the sin,
Forget to stop it and forget to begin,
Eventually ceasing so here we can stay,
I'm happy now knowing. What more can we say?

.....

TRIALS FIND THEIR WAY TO THE PAST,
While errors keep moving like first comes in last.
And guilty relations are severed apart,
Then mind comes to reason as courage to the heart.

Eventually as we look and see, fall lifeless, endlessly.
Separate billings, trials, retarding together,
A form of pleasure ... and sometimes joyous,
to a different drummer.

.....
WAKING SUNSHINE, eternal fire, not making much of reality,
Nor finding together, almost lovely, a treasure lost,
Cannot be explained, though sometimes every day, every time.
We float uneasy, as we drift ruptured, as we live dying -
For blues as they be, are not all colors but form a great spectrum.

And living thoughts, popular as they seem,
Can be all so real for now I to see the fall.
Baby crying. Father everlasting, yet nowhere,
To behold a crimson span that comes after me.
What does it matter? Does failure bring death?
Oh, cry, Eternal fire!

Burn me peacefully, and let me sing
An emotion that can't be spoken.
Oh, for the love of you! Let me die the final death.
Let the sun fall on me. For,
Shining deep, is not always rewarded.

.....
FOREVER BUT NOT EVERLASTING.
Pray dear God, to let the pitfalls rise.
Oh, let me lift the load and form the sting.
Was it not meant to be this way?
Forming the Castle of Rock to be built upon these sands?
So that they may be built and fall, and be washed into the Sea.
Only to be re-built by some passing mystery.
And then to repeat ... and then a defeat ... does it mean the end?
Or does it cause a new dynasty to be ruled by you
Where I believe these happenings to be real?
As real as the belief that takes us through stages,
As real as the unheard voices of sages
As real as the questions we must ponder
As real as the hope that's just over yonder.

.....
IF YOU LIVE ONLY FOR ONE,
You live almost for none.

.....
IN AN EVENING OF INFINITY I CAME TO SEE
A shadow of eternity
And while I gazed into the night
I chanced to see a warning's light.

It came to me so carefully
At first I was ashamed
That I would doubt the realness of...
Its realness ... and its name.

Oh come to me I need you so
Oh come and let me see
Oh come eternal Pleasing Fire
Oh come ... and light on me.

.....
THE HEAVENS SHAKE AND THE EARTH IT MOVES
While cleansing the whole world wide
The flames burnt sin – let's start again...
For the whole world just had died.

.....
THE UNCONTROLLABLE DESIRE
To engage in the unmentionable
Is an initiative worth mentioning.

.....
BECAUSE OF THE UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES surrounding this situation,
I am forced to re-solve some of my previous intentions and dissolve the remaining.
Now is the time to decide the difference. Now is the time to distinguish the
necessary from the trivial. Fortunately for the person to succeed me, the way will
not be very uncomfortable. For the way has been paved ... the way has been
decided. However, if these persons be unwilling to travel on the course prepared,
then they will be forced to pave their own, this in turn would make my troubles
meaningless.
(Can I be spared the anguish and fear, the struggle, the failures?
If only I could be sure!)
If only I could predict my fate and the fate of my own successors.

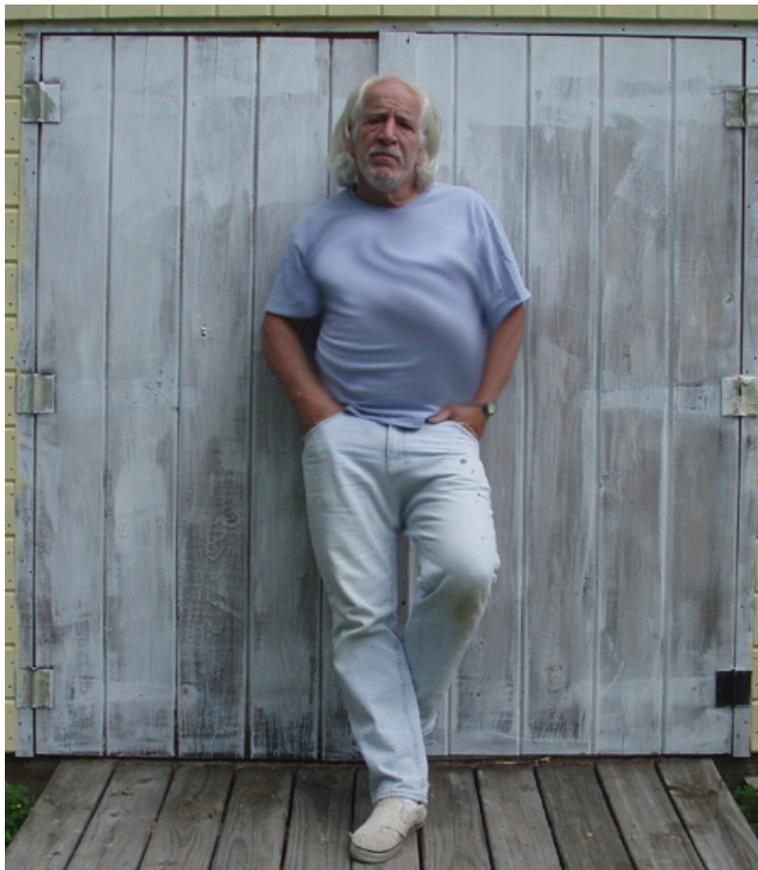
.....
AH, FOR TEARS TO OVERCOME ME.
Ah, for the sweet tears of pain and trouble.
Yes, the tears are longed for. For the sweet contentment that follows the desperate
cry is the most glorious state to which I could be subject.

UNFINISHED SHORT ESSAY

Although there are more than a hundred countries, dozens of religions, and a vast array of cultures, there are only a few distinct *societies* in the world today. Each one articulates its own mantra, mission, beliefs, and laws... whatever you want to call it... its own "personality" that enables the members to live together. This also, on a greater scale, enables societies to coexist with each other ... those societies that share the basic, universally accepted standards such as peace, tolerance, human rights, etc.

These "personalities" are defined by acceptance ... not necessarily by agreement. Many people believe that the terms of living in a society require people to abide by the rules accepted as guidelines by their society but also believe that as individuals they are entitled to express disagreement with those rules ... a right protected by the accepted belief in free speech.

However, in many, not all, parts of the world, if a person disagrees with the rules of a society to the degree that life within that society has become unbearable; they are free to seek out or create a different society. Many times these will exist within a larger, umbrella society. Other times these will be totally separate from, and unrelated to, any other society ...



.....

WHAT KIND OF FEELINGS DO I POSSESS NOW?

I have just encountered doubt ... not the doubt that I hold for myself ... it is the doubt I encountered when someone doubted me. The lack of trust. The lack of faith that I expected ... the faith that I *felt* was due me. I strive towards goals that I never strived for before ... goals that I must reach ... goals necessary for my life ... the life that I now hold so dear to me ... the life that I now see as something more than just plain existence. I have finally put some value on myself and the ways that I act ... and ... I encounter a setback: a trivial, menial, but discouraging form of defeat. Alas, my friend ... is this really defeat? Or is this some sort of excuse I have fallen upon ... an excuse that I can use to justify my own failure? This I say then: "let any man try to stop me. Try it, fools! Try to stop me! I am insane with the will to live ... insane with the will to survive. Can you stop me? Try! Better to try damming your cursed soul if you think even in your wildest dream ... that you can stop me! Impossible! Do you understand? I say impossible. Tempt me if you must; strike me if you dare ... and if you should attempt to hold me ... if you should attempt to stop me ... you will only defeat your own pathetic means of survival. Your life? No, I would never relieve you of your perfect means of wretchedness ... your only means of death ... your only means of torment. No, this, I permit you to keep. This, I permit you to cherish ... even in your distorted mind. Do you enjoy this sense of freedom? ... this feeling that allows you to think that you are not imprisoned? Even though you know that the reality of *this* situation is that you are imprisoned ... in a prison that allows no escape. Yes, you will be tormented for the rest of your existence, never to return to the *life of the free*. You will be caught in the tunnel of time ... the tunnel of no end ... where not even death is an escape ... and to this I will condemn your miserable soul until eternity arrives at a cease ... then shall you escape life ... likely to be brought forth into the company of Hell.

.....

REVIVAL STANDS WITH OPEN ARMS

And antiques lay unused.
Where modest face and lands misplaced
And legs and feet are fused.

If you don't believe this clip of tales
If you think that they're untrue
Every now and every then
The trouble is with you.

.....

The biggest mistake we can make is believing that the future begins tomorrow. We have spent our entire lives getting to this point. Now is the time for us to shine. These moments belong to us. What we do now... from this heartbeat forward... will define who we are and why we are here.

.....

MAN IS NEVER SATISFIED WITH WHAT HE HAS ... MORE AND MORE,
Just give meaning to time,
Just give me a little more time, A little more time.

.....

THE FORGOTTEN SAVIOR, WHOSE LIFE IS INCOMPLETE,
can only believe in the limits
of his knowledge ... but, the popular Redeemer is open to new horizons in the field
of intellect.

.....

BEAUTIFUL DREAMS CAN NOT TO BE SCREENED
And the knowledge for this is new,
For every now and every then,
The trouble is not you.

.....

YOU CAN'T BELIEVE THAT IN THIS WORLD
The people do not cry
And in this place I sense this taste
That responds to who knows why.

.....

REDS REVISED

They've taken all my money; beat me to the ground;
choked the breath right out of me ... my throat won't make a sound.
Still they stand before me, lying to my face.
How could they do the things they do? It's such a big disgrace.

Well, you can see that I'm still here. I will stand up tall and never run away.
I would never let you down ... as long as I'm around.

.....

GOD ... REST THESE OLD SOLDIERS

.....

.....

THE RIVER. THE OCEAN

I had never heard of this man before a few days ago. And even then, it was only a few sentences ... a couple of short lines about his long past ... a brief mention of his current situation ...
and the misfortunes that befell him in the final years.

What I did find out was that this *stranger* had touched upon the soul of one of my oldest and dearest friends and that made it a little more personal to me. His close association with someone close to me, in a way, meant that he was not a *complete* stranger ... he was a friend of a friend ... which meant that had the timing been just slightly different ... he could have been a friend of mine.
I know that he was loved by many people ... for his sense of humor, his gentle bear-like presence ... he was a big man. He was a pleasure to be around and to be his friend was an honor. His rough and tumble youth and the mishaps he experienced along the way ... all formed a foundation for his years of commitment and passion for helping people ... especially those with drug or alcohol dependencies.

And his passing did have an effect on me.

When I found out, all I could do was think about – close my eyes and attempt to take in – what must have been terrible grief and pain for my dear friend. How she must have wept. How the injustice of death spares no one ... not even the living. I tried to imagine how angry and hopeless she must have felt. I know how she felt.
I've felt that way, too.

We all have at one time or another.

The absolute weakness and smallness we feel
when someone we love is gone.

Can we turn this over in our minds and hearts and find something fulfilling about this man's life ... something that enriches us and permits us to close our eyes to think back ... and remember what it was like to be with really good friends in a really close and warm, nurturing friendship? Can we find the strength to release the pain and sorrow ... let it flow into a river of joy and relief ... into an ocean of peace and happiness?

Wouldn't it be nice if there is a small place in our hearts for the people we've never met?

Wouldn't that be the legacy my distant friend would have wanted?

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FULL CIRCLE

I've fallen down in harder times
I've faltered in my steps
I might have struggled getting out of bed
Wherever I might have slept
Should you see me bending
As I walk with this heavy heart of stone
I would only ask of you, my friend
Don't leave me here, alone.

Though there might be bridges that I've burned
I might have gone too far
I might have made a desperate turn
To end up where we are.
I might have said a cruel word
Or spoken out of line
Am I asking too much of you now
To help me one more time?

The years have passed me by at last
I'm broken up inside
My heart is beating slowly now
Barely keeping time.
In this dimly lit apartment's light
Through the shadows that it's thrown
Would you hold my hand a moment now?
Don't leave me here, alone.



THE HEART MADE OF STONE

When I met you I knew this would come.
God only knows what I've done.
But the time has come near to take you from here.
To take you where I've never been.
Then I'll leave here alone
With my heart made of stone
I'll walk away ... from here.

I can see in your eyes that you know
Yes, it's time that we both just let go.
Well "Cry Baby" please, it's not easy for me.
If I could I would go in your place.
But I leave here alone
With this heart made of stone.
I'll walk away ... from here.

I wonder if somehow you hear.
I can still see your eyes through my tears.
When you leave me today.
Because there's no other way.
I wish I could hold you once more.
So I leave here alone
With my heart made of stone.
I'll walk away ... from here.



HOW WE SPEND OUR LIVES
has more to do with what we leave behind
and less to do with what we leave undone.



THE FACE OF GRIEF IS SOMETIMES A SMILE.



FIRE

Grief is a fire that needs little tending.

THANKSGIVING

For those readers not in this country Thanksgiving is a celebration that started 400 years ago in this country by pilgrims who felt obligated to recognize and thank the deity of their choice for ...everything, I guess.

Well, I think one shouldn't have to wait until the last THURSDAY of November to be thankful for whatever ...I do it every morning when my 20 year old cat jumps in the bed and wails until I pet him and hug him. Every morning. Ever since he had two close calls with death I have come to absolutely cherish every moment I have with him. I give him everything he wants. I feed him more frequently than the other cats because he likes it. I make special arrangements for him so that when he sleeps on my lap and the dogs don't bother him. I pick him up and carry him around and hug him and pet him and attempt to communicate through our shared physical contact. I want to know if he can sense what I am feeling. I love it but in a way it's sad ...because I know that our days together are numbered. So I'm thankful we have this time.

I am also thankful for all the good and bad things that happened in my life so far... The bad decisions as well as the good ... The opportunities I missed as well as those I grabbed ... The people who have supported me and those who turned their backs on me. I would not be here today if it wasn't for all of the things that happened to me in the past. So I am thankful that it all balanced out and it is what it is. I do not bemoan my mistakes. Those wrong turns helped me find my true path. So again, I am thankful for what was.

I would think this incredible social media enterprise is something to cause celebration. I just think it's so wonderful that we have the opportunity to share our thoughts and feelings and opinions and everything that happens in our lives if we so choose to share them with this vast fabric of friends and acquaintances. I am a true fan of this experience. I am thankful for all of the great new friends I have met and all of the old friends who have reconnected with me over these years. It's truly an amazing experience and such a great opportunity. So, I am thankful for what is.

I am thankful for the road ahead. I look towards the future with a certain degree of optimism as well as a generous helping of realistic apprehension. I know that there will be some great things and I also know that there will be some not so great things. I know that things will go wrong but I also know that a lot of things will go just right. I think a key to that is to focus on my circle of family and friends and add a few new faces to that great collection. At the same time I am not going to let go of the cry-babies, the weak-minded, those who cannot accept their place in the world, and anyone so selfish and blind who only live to drag others down. There's no time or place in my world for that. So, I'm thankful for the future.

So now, what I am most thankful for is being fortunate to have such a dynamic and inspirational partner in this life. If I was to give anyone any credit or thanks it would be to my beautiful and loving wife. To have someone who believes in me and encourages me and has the patience and strength to stand behind me when I lose sight ... who holds me when I fall apart ... and sees me for the person I am, I was, and will be is an unimaginable blessing.

I am absolutely most thankful for her.



DECK THE HALLS ... OR DON'T

The holidays always bring out the saints as well as the sinners. The self-righteous and the sheep. Sharing a family event with either can be a test of our kinship and humility. I have faced the same type of situation with half my family being Jewish and now another half of it Christian and another half sort of uncommitted either way. I participate or better I attend their particular services out of respect and in consideration of our relationships. I do not take offense at what they preach...I just don't buy it. I do not tell them they are wrong I do not criticize them I do not attempt to convert them. They are all intelligent people I just want people to be happy. But if given the opportunity I think that I would either write my own piece or find something out there that paid homage to the views I have. I might talk about our responsibilities as family and friends and as participants in this global society... Taking care of each other and taking care of ourselves.

Embracing the words and wisdom of the prophets of atheism as well as the revered preachings of those who speak the golden rules before they lapse into dogma. I would not loudhorn a challenge that debunks religion but I would justify the universality of logic, wisdom, patience, and understanding.

Often I read of atheists who passionately debate and argue the points and I see how ineffective and aggressive that can be. I think it's better to simply state what I believe rather than what I do not. I would rather say how important it is for people to live in peace and to allow each of us as individuals to follow our own path. I would lead by example. And encourage those around me to bring "it" to me. Let them, by my example, become inquisitive. "How can you be such a conscientious and loving person and not believe in God?"... well that would be a good opportunity for us to gently introduce our points of view. It certainly would be much more effective then spouting conversion rhetoric especially in a situation that is family-centered.

Regardless of where we come from ... Raise the banner. Bring the Peace.



POLITICS

I'm not concerned with rich while folk and all this financial drama because the politics of redemption hold court at this temple.

There is no forgiveness where pride exists.

That which holds us back...releases us.

That which lets us go...keeps us close.

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VETERAN'S DAY

My father was a WWII veteran. Not a war "hero" ... just an average guy like so many others. I'm not sure of anything outstanding he did during his life but I know he was loyal to his friends, never backed down from a fight, loved dogs and cats, and was a huge Sinatra fan ... and Jimmy Durante, too. He respected nice clothing and fine cars. And he wasn't perfect. He was not a textbook anything ... often living like a single man ... not handling marriage and parenting so well. I think he fought his way through life taking his lumps and not crying about his bad choices or the cards that he played. That was the way it was.

Toward the last few chapters of his life he grew closer to his children and grandchildren who welcomed him with love and understanding. No grudges. No crying about our fractured childhoods. No guilt trips. Shit happens. No ones perfect. People do what they do. You. Me. Him.

It's not the mistakes in life that define who we are; it's how we recovered and charge forward that matters. It's how we defend our our friends and family; how we hold honor and loyalty like banners throughout the tough times ... and it's how we open our arms with love and forgiveness ... expecting nothing in return ... but a nod or glance of appreciation.

I'm a lot like him I'm happy to say. For better or worse. I made my share of bad decisions ... burnt some bridges and broke some hearts along the way. But I think I'm the better person today for all that. The remaining chapters in my life will hopefully play out with appropriate drama and a healthy dose of humor and style. Just like him.

I like Sinatra, too.

So, like so many of the fathers who served ... and even though my dad never got a medal for his role ... I proudly salute him today.

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"True valor is not measured by what you kill ... It is measured by what you save. "

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"Valor is not a measure of physical strength nor is it born of furious anger. Compassion and courage are the banner and shield of true guardians."

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REUNION

It's been 20, 30, or more years since some of us have seen each other. Such a long time has passed, separating who we are today from that younger version we were back then. Resting comfortably in the backs of our minds are the wild, crazy, hysterically funny, intensely passionate renegades who feared nothing, craved everything, and challenged the world with obstinacy, endurance, strength, and excitement. Those early editions of our current selves spewed out chapter after chapter of mesmerizing adventures, foolish mistakes, harmless pranks, and awkward romances. Yet, happily, we continue to add new episodes ...like a favored cable TV show that each season takes us further and deeper into the characters and story line. Watching as time slowly transforms our faces, our bodies ...and how it also feeds our souls ...making us bigger, more vibrant, and more believable. Those rough-edged, razor sharp, foot stomping, soul sacrificing rockers have given way to these honed, focused, balanced yet slightly out of bounds ...rockers.

We have been blessed. Happily, social media and the ease of connectivity have enabled us to stay in touch, if even from a vast distance, to follow the growth and journeys each of us have experienced over the span of time. Allowing us to bear witness as our friends go through the motions of life ... career, family, travel, hobbies, loves ...sadness and losses. All of this makes the social fabric stronger ... this tapestry we all weave together is full of color and energy and rips and tears but still ...like a big, old, comfy blanket on a brisk autumn evening ...it wraps us in the cozy warmth of fond memories.

I am sure we will meet again. Wrap our arms around each other and briefly erase all that has happened since last we held ourselves so close. We will look into the eyes that remember us for who we were. We will marvel and applaud how we've changed and the things we've achieved. Touch the hearts that have loved so much and suffered so deeply ...as we all have. Take some selfies and promise to do it again real soon. Yes. It would be incredible fun.

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"Courage is the foundation of Resistance."

ENERGY

I just don't believe in angels, devils,
heaven, or hell.

I do believe in energy:

Our personal and individual energy.

Because energy is real.

It exists while we're alive and it
continues to exist after we die

When It will merge with all the energy of the universe

Just as rain is absorbed into the ocean and
sunshine is stored in the forests.

This energy surrounds all of us

And just as we're tuned into the energy
of people we love while they're with us ...

We will occasionally sense it after they're gone.

And when we die our energy will join theirs
and exist together forever.

Nice.

WHEN YOU'RE GONE

Who will feel my love when you are gone?
Who will understand my words or feel my caress like you?
Who will feel the love I have when this love is only for you.

And now you are leaving me?
But I still have this love.
And it will have no place to go.
It will be lost.

That is why ... even now,
While you are still here with me
it hurts so much.

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I REALLY LOVED BOWIE

I liked a lot of his songs ...not all of them ...but a lot.

Things I liked most about him were about him. He was fearless. Energetic. Bold. Smart. Good looking. Charismatic. Confident. Demure. Inquisitive. Educational. Stylish. And he had nice hair.

And he made cool music and theatre and dance and fashion and art ...

and he had nice hair.

When I think of him today and yesterday (after learning of his death) I had a hard time grasping the whole thing. Really shocked. He's was only a little over five years older than me. But what really amazed me was how he handled it. How he accepted it and dealt with it and brought it under his control. How he did not relinquish his life to his death. He seemed to glide out of this plane onto the next. I know it wasn't an easy thing to do - I've watched many friends and family succumb to cancer ...it's never "easy" ...but it is handled differently by everyone.

David Bowie stayed true to his "self" I think. He never stopped being who he was - which really impressed me even more because it exploded in me the realization of how big he was in life. How REALLY BIG he was and how special he was! If his chosen path to the end is any clue to who he was ... he was an AWESOME man!

Warren Zevon was another like David ...the things he did upon learning of his impending final curtain.

I'd be lucky and blessed, when the time comes, to accept the inevitable in as dignified a manner as these two guys.

But David's hair!

Man!



Hi Katie!

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