

Making Peace With The Past



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How do we see the past? Not as a sequence of memories stored on some sort of wet-drive, like a computer. Memories are more like sudden entries into a half familiar world. Memories are more like dreams than we would imagine, and so they become jumbled. There is no date stamp on a memory like there is on a modern digital photograph.

So when I went through my old negatives, bits and pieces of my past suddenly appeared, and for a time, I lived there, in my past.

This was my journey through my life, that it was from October 2021 has no real meaning. I visited along my timeline, hopping from point to point, and at the end, I was able to derive some sort of linear order which then drifted away, like squirting a line of chocolate sauce into a pond. I can feel it dissipating with every movement of the air.

Making Peace with the Past

My project recently has been to go through a small box of memories from a turbulent, violent, emotionally agonizing period of my life, decades long.

And sure enough, seeing the people I wronged, the young faces of the ones I hurt, was traumatizing. For a while. Then I started to get a handle on the timeline. This wasn't decades of struggle, this was age 18 to 23, five years say, but really half that, the time spent in residence at University. The time spent around thousands of other kids trying to become adults. We were all searching, I wasn't unique in my troubles at all.

And then there was the personal tragedy of my life then.

Except what are all these smiling faces, what are these memories of laughing until my sides hurt, where did they go in my long years of assuming I was miserable during that time.

And those I hurt, well yes, one or two of my lovers who came afterward were certainly treated badly by me, but I have cautiously checked up on them and they seem to have had brilliant careers, heads of research programs and such. They didn't seem to be the broken dolls I had imagined.

Could it be that I wasn't as much a force of (ill) nature as I thought? Could it be that I was less important, less influential than I had fantasized? And what were those nights filled with laughter and love? Yes there was a bad time at the end but perhaps I am remembering my own pain and confusion as

much as theirs.

Could it be that growing into a man, moving from the childish damage from others to the self-inflicted damage of an adult, moving from 18 to mid-20s has become more traumatic than it needed to be. Especially when I consider the length of my life.

I have begun to listen to my own advice to the girls I taught self defence. "Nobody gets to tell you how you feel about your experiences". Turned inward that means "only you, egotist that you are, could turn growing up into some sort of monster story"

Yes I was an asshole, but as a good friend told me last week. To be an asshole and a shithead when young isn't a crime. To fail to learn from that certainly is.

Have I become a better person? I'm getting there I hope, and having a careful look at my past has opened me up a bit more. Yes I'm sorry for some of the things I did. Would I do them now?

It's your past, get over it. A bad Idea is to use that past to excuse the same behaviour today. Forty years of doing the same thing makes you a fossil, a stone that sort of looks human. To live is to learn and to learn is to change.

Oct 10, 2021



He's Escaped

Oh Hell
he's escaped
into the hall again
Someone go get him

Me?
No, I'm taking shots
probably some of my first nudes
ever
~~
Oct 1, 2021

Mike Briscoe was the second Wizard I met at the University.
Someone with the ability to talk/knock some sense into me.



Massey Hall Coffee Shop

How many times
did I head down this path
from the Massey Hall basement
to my room in residence

So many times
that I forgot the boiler stack
I looked at this photograph
and thought "did I fold the negative?"

~~

Oct 1, 2021

Bite My Ass

"Bite my ass" she yelled
and so we ran down from the tower
burst into her room
and did so

It's a wonder
we were never thrown in jail
I'm sure we would be
today

~~

Oct 1, 2021



Back Home

How many years
being driven
from my mother's house
to the university
How many years
did it take
before I saw this view
of the power plant
and my residence
and thought
"Back home"

~~

Oct 1, 2021



Birthplace (Port Stanley)

The grain elevators are gone
The Rhea is gone, rotted
sunk, raised and scrapped

Seagulls continue
if not flocking after the fish tugs
they are following tractors

~~

Oct 1, 2021



Bobby-Bear

My long suffering roommate
was a hard working fellow
Kept his side tidy
and pretended to sleep
when I'd bring a girl home
I never said
but I appreciated him

~~

Oct 1, 2021



Typewriters

What are those strange machines?
Why they are typewriters Billy
You would put paper in
and hit the keys hard
and shaped levers
would hit an inked ribbon
to make a mark on the paper

Once you had a typewriter
you didn't need anything else
No Wifi
No printer
No toner
Of course mistakes were mistakes
back then in the olden days

~~

Oct 1, 2021





This was on the same roll as my first "real" nude shoot, which seemed to be more of an adventure than I remember, what with the crazy apartment-mates roughing up the model. This is of course a "selfie nude" which was not so common as it is today, but was always a good place to start.

Of course it was taken with a mirror. I suspect I was still 19, no more than 20 for sure.

You invite a model to pose for you, the suite-mates descend then have the good grace to bugger off. I suspect this was my very first actual nude shoot with a model, perhaps she was someone we knew, judging by the boys, she seemed to be a sport about it.

If you want to see where my nudes went after digital, then you can check out

<https://180degreeimaging.com/180taylor/index.html>





Christmas 1975 at Gramma's house. My mother and my stepfather.



An impromptu portrait session in The Keg. Ward was the first Wizard I ever met, a wizard at healing. He and his girlfriend saved me from doom several times over the years. I hope he knows I appreciated it.

Who is that
Someone with a long coat
and wide leg jeans
a watch cap

When someone saw me
with my camera
they always smiled
never shouted "delete that"

I have seen her
over the years
always the same age
always smiling

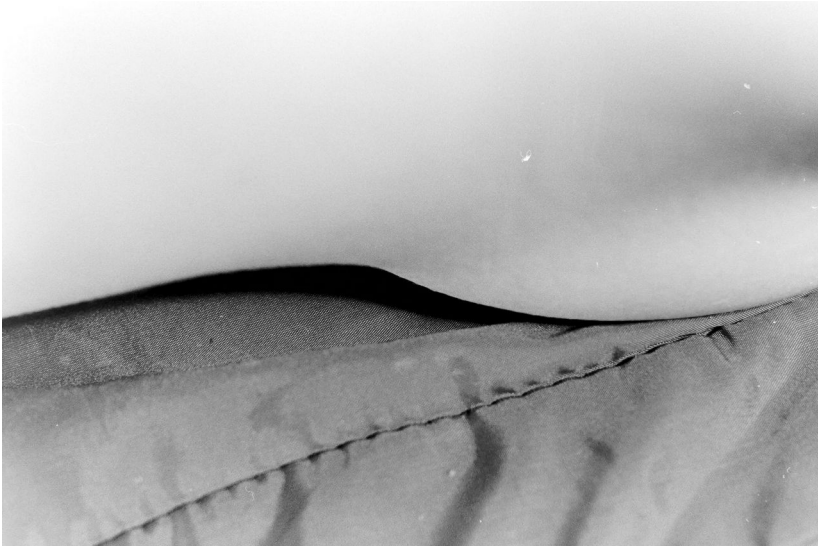
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Oct 2, 2021



Body Landscapes

Something I have been doing for a long time apparently, I love the view of the human body from about four inches. I'm still taking these shots, my modern models ended up quite comfortable with my camera bouncing off of them.





Back For a Visit

If you had asked
I would have said
that after leaving for University
to get out of grade 13
I never went back

But here is a photograph
me in my University colours
and friends in High School jackets

Things that don't happen in your mind
might have happened in your life

~~

Oct 2, 2021



There and Seen

What do I see
as I look to the past
look to the photographs
I took in my youth

I see friends
who liked me
I see models
who saw some merit
in my work

I see I was present
not the ghost
my youth is now
I was there and seen

~~

Oct 2, 2021



Whose Dog

Whose dog is that?
It's my room
it's my rat
Those are my photographs
tacked up on the wall
But whose dog is that?

~~

Oct 2, 2021



My Old Man

Is that my old man
on a moped
He lost his license
and bought one
that looked like that

He's coming from the LCBO
and has a paper bag
in the back
Sometimes I wish
my memory was better

~~

Oct 2, 2021



A Love Like That

It may last an hour
it may last a lifetime
but once, for however long
should be a love you remember
for your whole life

A love that produces poems
produces ecstasy
unbearable agony

Never back away
a love like that
can define your life
A love like that
can teach you

~~

Oct 2, 2021



I Wanted That Shot

God I wanted that shot
ten frames
and I have remembered
for forty years
Not a great image
but the lessons learned
have lasted

~~

Oct 2, 2021



Families

East Residence was co-ed
Not unusual today
but the first generation
of boys and girls together

We made families
we cooked together
and the girls
would cut our hair

~~

Oct 2, 2021



Four Floors Up

She lived four floors up
and late at night
when the doors were locked
I would climb up the balconies
and knock on the patio door

~~

Oct 3, 2021



Come See My Etchings

Come see my photographs I would say
if it wasn't come for tea
and often they would come
and be surprised there were photographs

~~

Oct 3, 2021



Naughty

To shoot something
meaningful
and not have the money
to develop the film

To develop the film
months later
and find the negatives thin
the images barely there

Just enough to see
what you have lost
what will never come again
Sadness, sadness

~~

Oct 3, 2021

Thin negatives
and thin memory
but finally that smile
that beautiful smile

~~

Oct 3, 2021

She was far smarter than I, and much more kind. I tried once to
read Wittgenstein and failed.



Friends Unkissed

There is more pain
in these old negatives
than I could have expected

Pain at loves missed
friends unkissed
and pain at negatives
too thin to be art
but not too thin
to be recognized

These people
Beautifully young
deserve better
than I gave them
with my silver attempts
to remember

~~

Oct 3, 2021

Breakfast

What do I say
to so many kind women
who tolerated a boy
confused, unsure
not knowing much
certainly not where
he was headed

Keep him warm
feed him in the morning
and watch him go
Perhaps he will return
perhaps not
but kindness is never
a waste of time

~~

Oct 3, 2021

To My Witch

Oh my beautiful girl
my brown eyed witch
who takes away my pain

Granny Weatherwax is dead
and I wish you were here
to hold me
while I cry a little

Granny is dead
and so is Terry
Who has given me a path
But I wish you were here
to hold me a little
while I cry

~~

Oct 3, 2021

You Saved Me

I was supposed
to save you my girl
but thinking back
You saved me

~~

Oct 4, 2021



The World in 4:3

You spent your youth
behind that camera
it kept you hidden
(so you thought)
kept you away
from human contact

You were frightened
easily hurt
so you hid yourself away
and lived your life
through the viewfinder

Many years later
you set the camera aside
not wanting to look
at the world
through that tiny window
on the back of the Pentax

But it took years
before you could let the world
through the fence
through the invisible camera
in front of you

~~

Oct 4, 2021



She Came to Visit

She came to visit
from another University
to give me some news
and to drink my friends
under the table

Later she said
"put it away
you don't need a camera
to see me"

~~

Oct 4, 2021



Caution: Art.

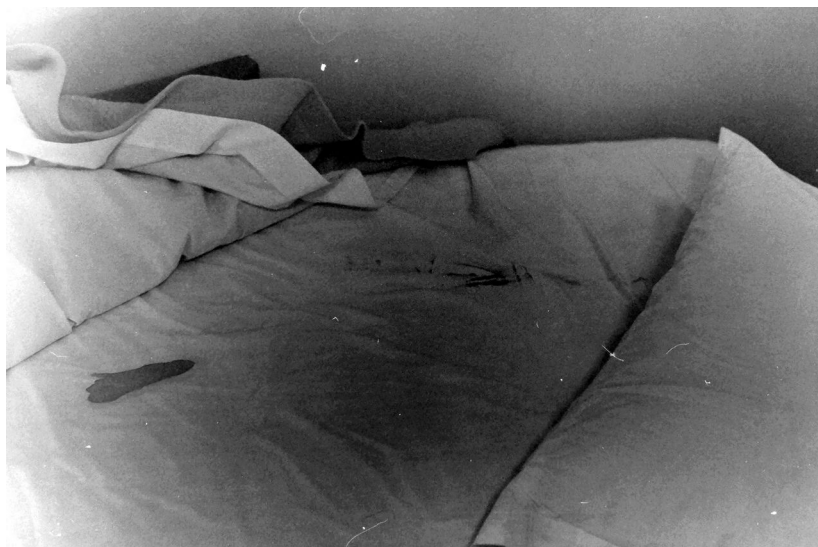
Garry Winogrand said
"all things are photographable"
or at least the documentary says

Deutsche Welle wants
to end the taboo

Tracy Emin showed us her bed
here is my bed

~~

Oct 4, 2021



Thank You

Did I ever thank you
for those nights
when you saved me
from myself
For those days
you helped me find
that vision I longed for

~~

Oct 4, 2021



Jealous of Topper

Is it really possible
that you can be jealous
of a horse

You've never loved
a horsewoman have you
Never tried to compete
with a handsome stallion

~~

Oct 4, 2021



Cowichen Sweater

And this evening
I looked in my closet
for a Cowichen sweater
my mother knit

The last
I could not give them all away
because deep in my memory
is a photograph of her

She sits half smiling
with that silver torc
I could never get the courage
to ask who gave it her

The mole on her neck
those eyes
I hugged that sweater
as if I were holding her

~~

Oct 4, 2021



The Last Steam Engine

The last steam engine
that ran the tracks
in Guelph
At least the last
I know of

I was always a fan
of O. Winston Link
and this is as close
as I will get to his work

~~

Oct 4, 2021



Diane

I would spend hours
sitting by her bed
Went here and there
even drove to Toronto
to take her to dinner
(I lost a tooth in the bread)

Just friends she said
although I would have liked
a little more than that
She transferred to Trent

I travelled, troubled
spent a night on a couch
in that University
but never called her
To go so far
to be so near
and feel I wasn't worthy

~~

Oct 4, 2021



Forgive me

Forgive me my love
I had forgotten the mark
on your forehead
How could I forget
How could I forget
anything about you

I wish, how I wish
I could forget
how I treated you
my dear friend
Forgive the stupid boy
I was then
if you can
~~
Oct 4, 2021



Out of Residence

Around this time
it all seemed to change
Around this time
John and I walked
found an abandoned house

Things changed before
and would change again
but to me now
working through a book
of negatives
This seems a line
between something
and the next thing

I have weeks to go
but if I let it out
put it here
I might survive
whatever it is I'm feeling now

Looking at what I was
Who I was
The stupid boy
who made me what I am
is not an easy task
so much more difficult
than what I thought it would be

I see now
that any peace I have
has been created
by putting the past away
This is an apology
to all those I hurt
The best I can do now

~~

Oct 4, 2021



One Great Love

When you're 20
it seems
you get one great love
one woman who sticks
and makes you understand
what love is
At 20 that's important

But at 20 I had two
and I had no clue
what to do
so I lost them both
Lost them to a search
for something I already had
~~
Oct 4, 2021

These Photos

These photos are not coming in sequence. I wish they were, because my past is a pond, I dip a line in and get what I get, all out of time. I do know that this shot was after I had been out west to find work and then back home again to work in tobacco. I know I look a little sleepy, but that's because it was early morning and I'd spent the night with someone. As I am going through these shots I am listening to Dylan's "Tangled up in Blue" and the idea of a woman bending over to tie your shoes hits me hard. Not only has that been literally true for me, there have been a hell of a lot of women who have made me breakfast, picked me up, taught me about life, and essentially put an aimless bunch of neuroses back on the path.

What I see in this photo is a kid who has been comforted. Who doesn't give a damn about the past or the future, but is waiting patiently for a coffee to appear.

This morning I was awakened by Brenda and my breakfast was on my desk, followed soon after by a coffee. If you think that's exploitative, I cook the dinners. This photo is roughly when I learned to accept the kindness of breakfast without putting it on a scoreboard.

Years later this woman came to visit and I treated her terribly because I was in a permanent relationship. Inexcusable, and ugly behaviour on my part. Nobody deserves to be treated like that and I vowed (once I had understood what I did) never to repeat it. You don't treat someone like dirt because you are trying to be kind to someone else. It upsets me even now that I was like that.

A woman who was nothing but kindness and understanding to me. Who took the shot? I'm looking at her. Can you see it?



Darlene

So very blond
she was
So very kind

She taught me
not to be surprised
Calmly, calmly

Accept what is
love while you can
and live now, now

~~

Oct 5, 2021



To Get the Shot

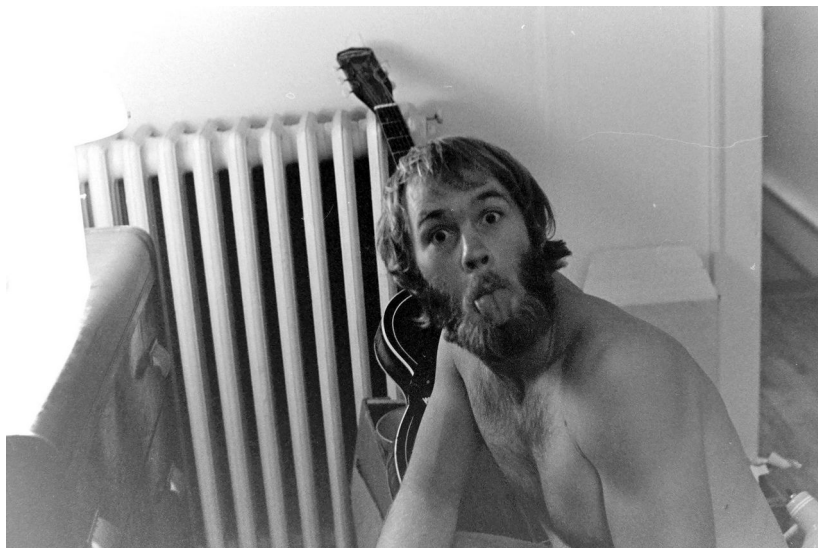
What's that joke?

The photographer says
do you mind if we shoot nude
and when she says fine
he undresses

Sometimes to get the shot
you have to give the shot

~~

Oct 5, 2021



OK I said
I will try faithful
and mostly
I was faithful

But still an asshole
I remember a time
waiting for her
I was furious
she was late

Late?
She was in hospital
with appendicitis
and I was an asshole

~~

Oct 5, 2021





Ed

You took on a couple of teenage kids
as well as a wife
You built a house
and provided as best you could
through some hard times
Don't think we didn't notice
And you worked
until you dropped, mail in your hand
A good man
who did his best
Don't think we didn't notice

~~

Nov 2, 2021

Never Left Again

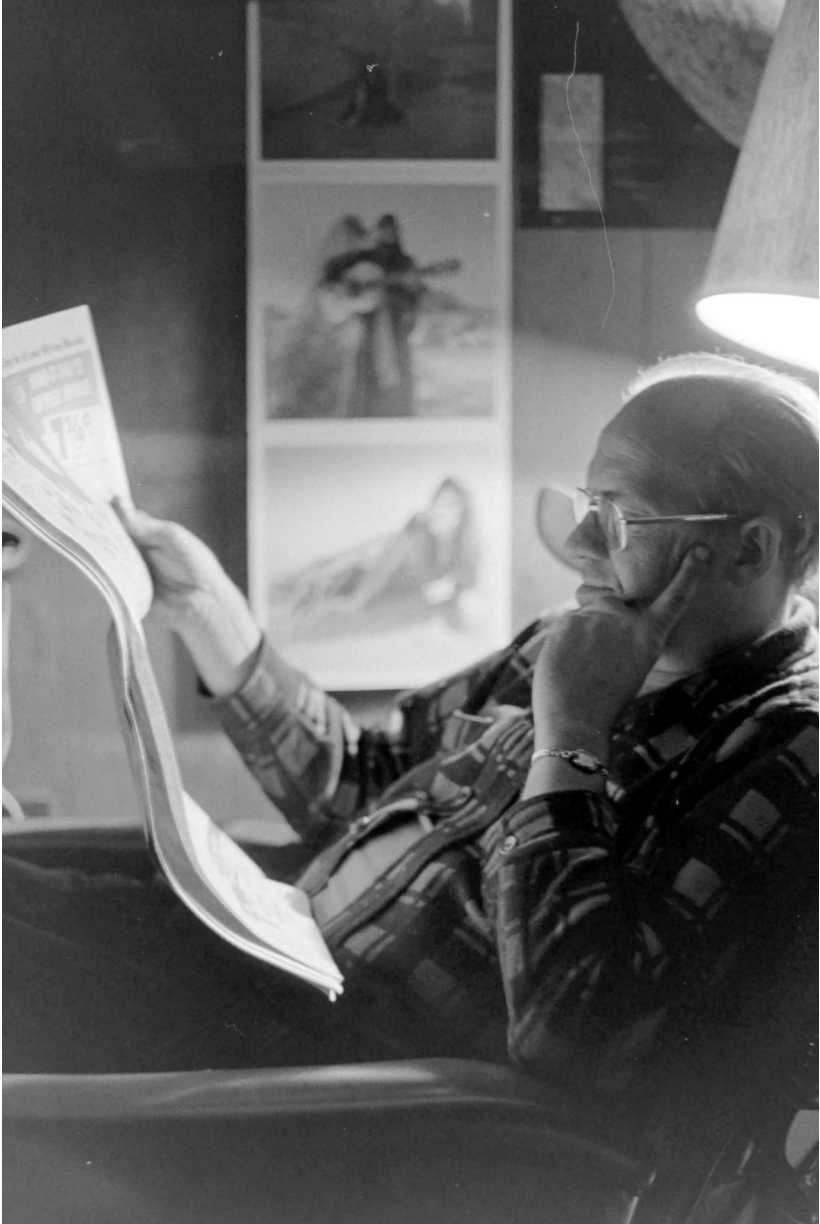
As far as absent old men go
you were OK
You were there when I needed you
and that was important to know

You had your space age stereo
and you loved Melanie's skate key
You once sat across the bar
and bought rounds
for a stranger girl and me
More tact than ever I would have thought

You went to Korea young
ended wounded in Japan
and never left town again
I get it now

~~

Nov 2, 2021



Eunice

I waited a long time
for you to come back
but you were learning to fly
and here was just ground

I bought you a crash kit
and while talking to you
I put your knife deep
into my thigh

~~

Oct 5, 2021



Suffolk Street

I loved that place
on Suffolk street
Thick stone walls
cockroaches and all

I refinished the floors
painted and papered the walls
built the shelves
and watered the plants

Three wives were with me there
the third booted out
when I was
They turned off the water

It ended with the first
when I bounced a spatula
off the sink
and into the ceiling
where it stuck

I spun around
and had my hands on her neck
but didn't squeeze

I'm not sure she knew
just how hard she pushed
the buttons
to get me to speak
But I knew the next time
I would squeeze

The second left twice
the second time forever
as she wanted to fly
and I wanted my apartment
I waited for a long time

One day
I opened a drawer
and didn't find my socks
That was when I understood
that my third had moved in

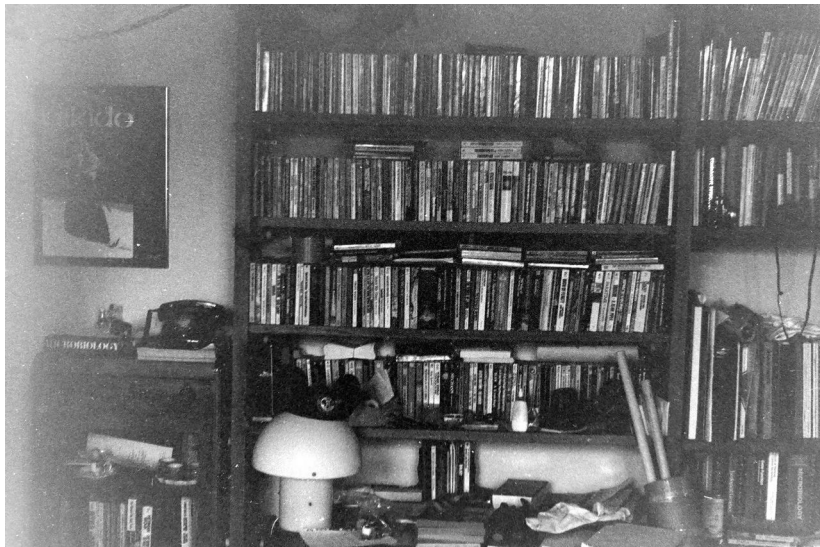
Third time lucky
she is with me still
although I don't know why
Possibly a house
and two kids
let her put up
with my shit

Creaky pipes
squeaky stairs
and a tiny balcony
looking out over a roof
But a claw-foot tub
in a tiny bathroom

I look up at the windows
once in a while
and think
"I used to live there
please take care
of my memories"

~~

Oct 6, 2021



In The Summer Heat

Is there anything
anything at all
that compares
to a beautiful girl
asleep on your pillow

~~

Oct 6, 2021



Jacqui

You invite the boy
to your room
to do some studying
and he brings his camera

You ignore him
for as long as you can
but eventually
you let him know

~~

Oct 6, 2021



Three Wise Men

Someone asked just what it was that the boys in 11.4 Glengary Hall taught me. Well they taught me that real men aren't afraid of what they have.

Oh dear, 1975-6 was often a bit silly. On the other hand, I wish I still had those underpants.

Yes children, as you suspected your dad was an idiot.



Cathy

I loved a foggy day
in Port Stanley
The horn blowing sadly

The seagulls
would let you sneak up
And it all seemed so soft

And there was a girl
who would let me
take her picture

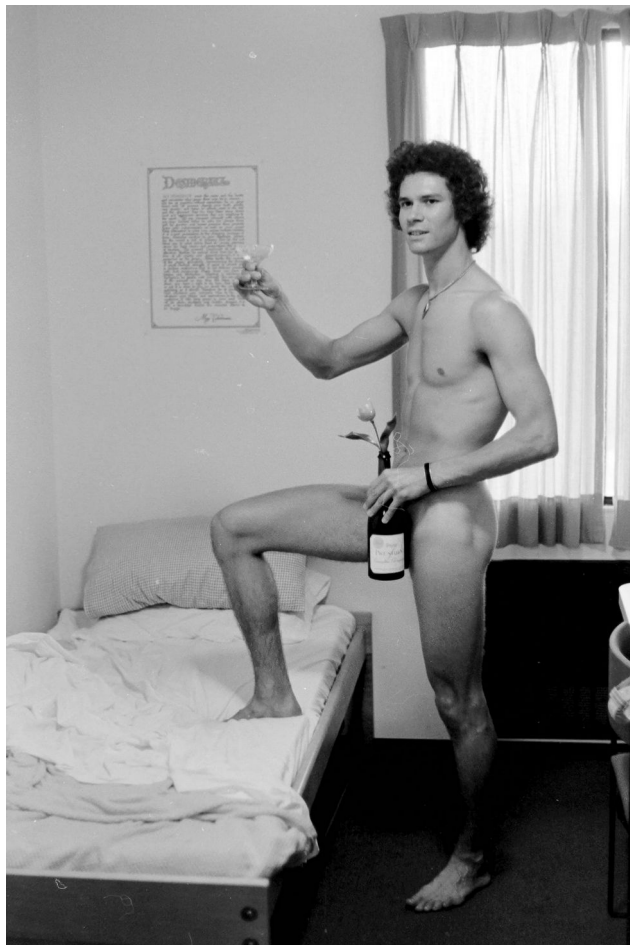
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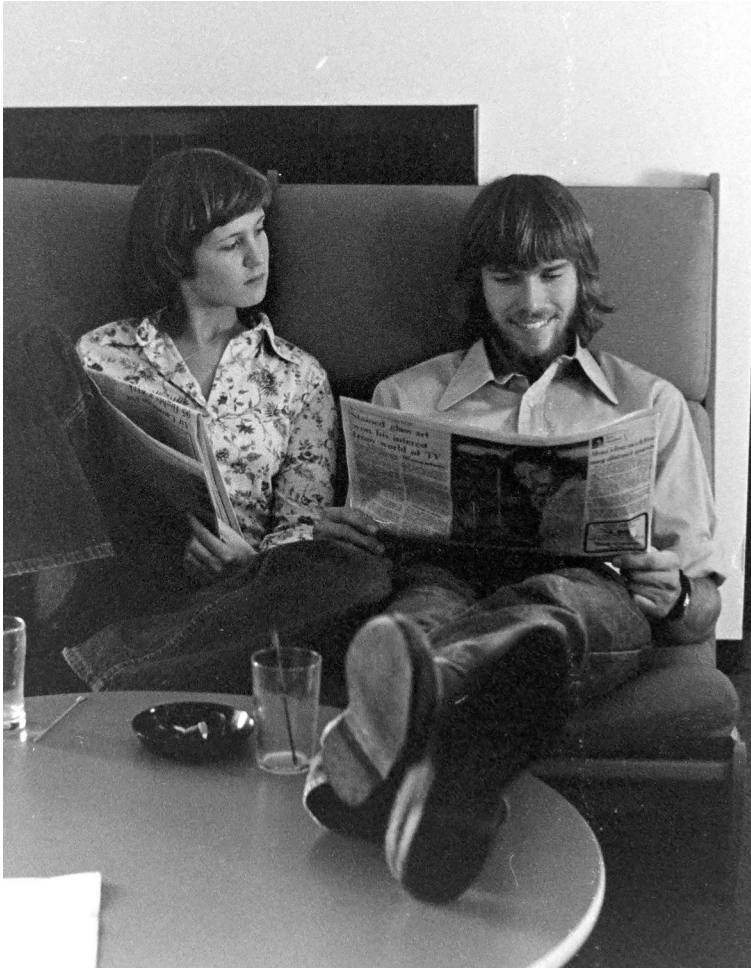
Oct 6, 2021



Phil

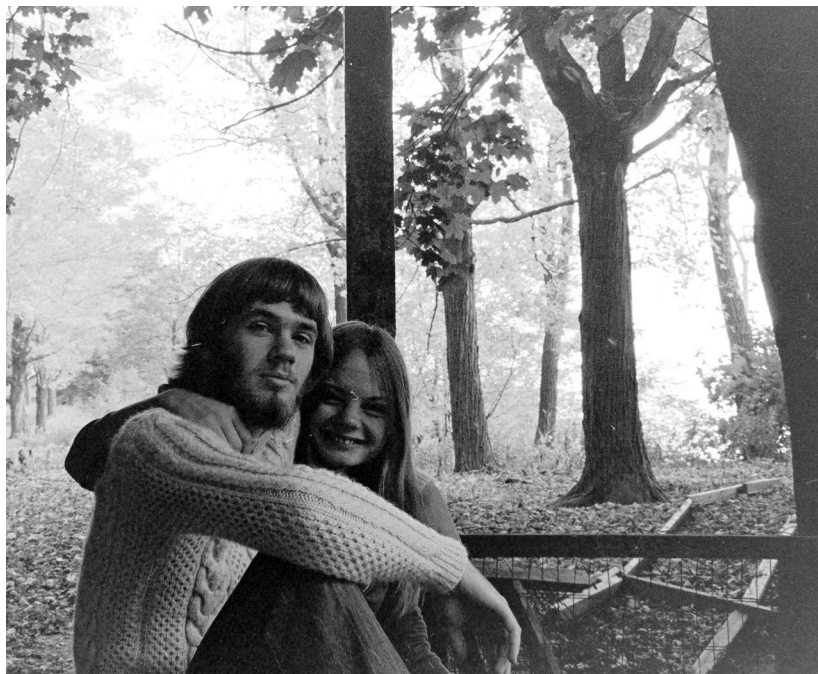
I'm pretty certain that was the first nude I ever took. You gotta love suite mates.





Relaxing in the lounge with the girlfriend. Reading the paper and sharing time together. There wasn't a happier time for me, and I was the one taking the photograph.

A Day in the Country





Nancy

You were a dear friend
we went through a lot together
and you took me to Haida Gwaii

I returned your kindness
with coldness
I didn't tell you
I was hurting you
to please another

I swore I would never do that
and yet I did
It seems I learn slow
and you paid for it

How do you make amends
thirty years late
It should never happen
It should never need to happen

~~

Oct 7, 2021

I once said that I had taken a photo of a tree, why should I take another? That's why I like to photograph people.

There are no people in these shots of Haida Gwaii, no shots of Nancy. This says a lot about what was happening during that agonizing trip.



1979, Bike Trip from St. Johns to St. John

You gave me the money
to trip on my bike
down east

If I had known
that worm of insecurity
and envy
was deep in my brain
I would have refused

I would have refused your love
chased you away
to save the pain
some years from then

But the times between
I would have missed them all
the love I felt for you
even if I couldn't show it

The love you had for me
the love I relied on
the love I needed

Perhaps I would have stayed silent
endured once again
our friends calling out "asshole"
For the sake
of those years between

~~

Oct 7, 2021



1979 Bike Trip II:

In the second oldest
Anglican Church
in North America
I sat alone and silent
writing a poem to you

Filled with longing
wishing you were there
or I was home
Home was where you were

Part of me
is still sitting
silent and alone
in that church
thinking of home

~~

Oct 7, 2021

Here is that poem

I sat in an empty church
and listened
as the rafters
of the second oldest Anglican church
in British North America
clicked.

And the roof snapped
as the afternoon sun
glowed through stained glass
the ancient pine
grown dark as oak
surrounded me with stillness

I felt the cool
of the air
as I thought
that I'd like to marry here
And then
but for a few stray pieces
thought no more
lost in the silence
that buzzed in my ears

~~

Sept 2, 1979

There is no doubt at all in my mind that this poem was about Lorna, yet there is no mention of her. I begin to understand a bit, that boy who wanted to marry a girl, but could not say so directly. Always a test, always the claim that "if you are serious about me, you will figure it out".

In my younger self's defence, I did write for her and I did tell her how I felt.



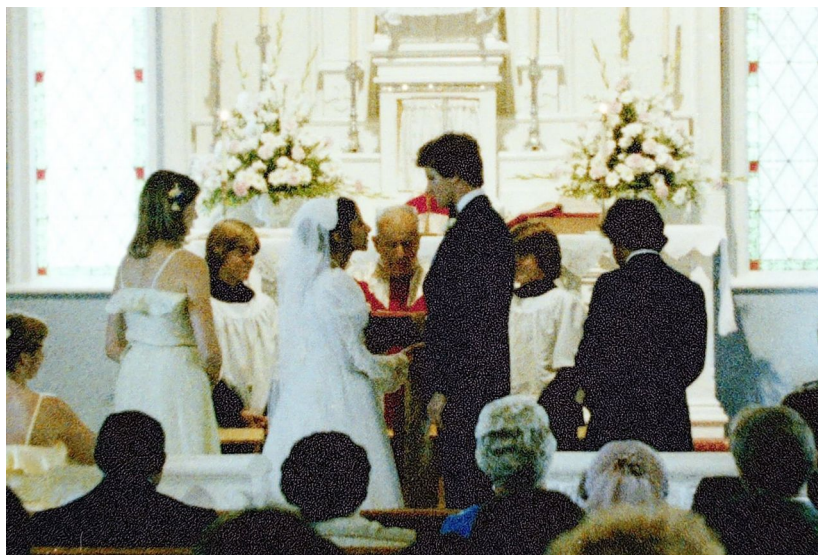
You Forgave Me Enough

How did I forget
that you invited me
to your wedding

Surely I should have known
all these years
that you forgave me enough

~~

Oct 7, 2021



Northumberland Street

Before our Suffolk Street apartment, Lorna lived with me in a big red house on the edge of downtown. She worked damned hard, much harder than I ever did, she had to be hard working to crash on that couch. She carried on right up to a PhD. Let's face it, she was much smarter than I, with the exception of a big blind spot... me. (And looking back, it bothered me much more than it should have).



Looking at her sleeping there gives me a feeling of calm. Just like it did all that time ago. She was restful.

Dance and Delight

My face tucked
into her neck
listening to her breathe

Her face tucked
under my chin
feeling the chest hair
dance and delight
in her breath

~~

Oct 8, 2021

The Big Red House

A Maple Laughs free zone
Flat beer and ice cream floats
for breakfast

Girlfriends wandering
in and out
sometimes taking one of us
with them as they left

The place remained unchanged
over the years
except for the cast
until one day I was also taken
out the door

~~

Oct 8, 2021



Ode to 2Upper Northumberland



Here is my bicycle
Lauren's now
There is my bar
across the bridge
and a block down



There is my desk
pictures of a girlfriend
gone years ago
on the wall as usual
Do you suppose
the new girls
might have noticed?



My poor goldfish
in a green bowl
that was often white
He would swim
out of a cloud
to bump the sides
He would wake me
late at night
making bubbles

And my nook
Out of all my places
that was my favourite
Covered with junk
it was usually empty
that chair
Well empty of junk
often filled with her

~~

Oct 8, 2021



Did I Do My Job

She wasn't very ticklish
except just after
she had an orgasm
And her orgasms
were quiet

I wonder if she knew
that's why
I tickled her
each time we made love

~~

Oct 8, 2021



Those Dimples

It's the edges
the transitions
that movement from
lower back
to ass
And those dimples
Oh I remember them

~~

Oct 9, 2021



In 1982

In 1982
we wore masks in the lab
masks in the threshing rooms
on the farms
and of course
masks when asked
to bare our butts for the camera

~~

Oct 9, 2021

In my later studio work I was fascinated by masks of various types, I suspect that project found its start right here.



My Mermaid

She was my mermaid
in a claw-foot tub
I would stand and watch
as she slipped and slid
up and down the sides
Not staying still
for more than a moment
But when she did
she would lean back
and grin at me
Come closer, closer
and suddenly I was soaked

~~

Oct 9, 2021



Lori

For many years
she drifted in and out
of my life
As if checking in
As if to meet the new girl

~~

Oct 9, 2021





Never mind the two up front, look there in the back, there's my second wife banging away.

I woke up at 4am one night in agony, before I knew it I had backhanded Eunice into the wall. She had been doing that technique on me, nikkyo, in bed, at 4am. When I asked what the hell she was doing she batted her eyes and said "I have to practice don't I?"

God she scared me sometimes.

Playing on the Radio

Doobie Brothers playing
and I'm scanning old photos

Three guys
and a nice Catholic girl
a case of beer
and we were heading
to Brantford
to watch Flesh Gordon

~~

Oct 9, 2021

My Life at Twenty

Knee socks

Once there were knee socks

and once

standing in line at the bank

I saw a girl in knee socks

and she looked so good

I almost came in my pants

~~

Oct 9, 2021

That Door

Those days
those hours
that I waited for her
to come home

Although I was working
That door was never far
from my thoughts

Each creak of the floor
Each car outside
drew me back to her
She's coming home

~~

Oct 9, 2021

Howzit

What's on my mind?
Right now I'm living in
four different places
with five different women
Thanks for asking

In a while
it may settle down
but for now
call me Dr. Who

~~

Oct 9, 2021

Fluffy

What were you reading
my sweet young girl

You who claimed you were dumb
and would do the spawning Grunion
Yet half the books in the place were yours
and you read books I could never get through

I called you fluffy
Short for fluff-head
Something you were not

~~

Oct 10, 2021



Cat Poem

Morning
not quite out of bed
but there's a poem forming
so I lie still
and let it come

Yes, line by line
it slowly appears and
Meayouwww
"shut up cat"
I think
the next line begins to appear
Meayouwww

On and on it goes
my deaf old grey cat
until finally
the poem is about him

~~

Oct 10, 2021

Hunting

Walking back
from the last pee
of the night
The hunter thinks
"I will get a snuggle"
before breakfast

But what presents
What is this
A wall of elbows and knees

Patience hunter
and soon enough
she rolls over
and I swoop

~~

Oct 10, 2021

I Am Not My Disease

I do not want to be my cancer
Nor my diabetes
my high blood pressure
my atrial fibrillation
or any of my other indications
of living beyond the design specs

What good to bitch and moan
to do my research
and chase every almond pit
and miracle cure to be had
for enough money
in another country

I can't be fixed
so while I'm alive
I will forget to measure the things
that tell me I'm dead
I will do as I always have
As much as I can
until one day I can't

~~

Oct 10, 2021

Eunice Moves to School

I looked away
just for a moment
or was it a day
When I looked back
you were gone

There was dust on the floor
where your cabinet was
and your clothes
half in the closet
half on the couch

I looked away
just for a moment
just for a moment
I swear
just for a moment

~~

Oct 10, 2021

I Go To Bed Early

I go to bed early
because that means
a day closer to you

Come home soon girl
too long away
and I start to forget
my reasons to live

~~

Oct 10, 2021

Port Stanley View

Each visit to my home town
yields a photograph
of the beach
one of the lighthouse
one of the harbour
and one of my father's house

How pleasant then
to see a view
from the lighthouse
toward the fuel tanks
and there, centred on the pier
is Cathy in her baseball jacket

She smiles at me
as if pleased to be with me
and I was happy
she was content to pose
to allow me to take her picture
on the pier

~~

Oct 11, 2021



What Beach Is This

What beach is this
not one I recognize
and who are the kids
in their bell bottoms
wandering together and apart
leaving footprints
in the wet sand

And what snake of nightmares
made that serpentine track
that the kids don't seem to notice
Is this a nightmare
have I slipped into horror
while I drift aimless
on this beach



Tombo

Dragonfly, Tombo
landing quietly
on the hand of a lonely boy
to bring connection
to the world
Welcome

~~

Oct 11, 2021



She Didn't Have a Dog

Driving my grandmother
to visit a friend
in the next town

Looking for something to amuse
while the ladies discussed
what ladies discuss

Finding an orchid
by a window
I use my camera
to adjust the time

Later, my grandmother says
I didn't know she owned a dog
A china dog in the window
I explain

~~

Oct 11, 2021



That is my Mother

Halloween again
or I hope so
It was never certain
where my mother was concerned

Wait, is that my jacket
my rope
and my knife
on her friend Denise

~~

Oct 11, 2021



Stupid Chickens

We were not rich
and often the house
would be empty of food

But we had a chicken coop
and we raised chickens

Every day for a couple of years
I had an egg salad sandwich for lunch
every day

And so you know
why I never eat it now
Stupid chickens

~~

Oct 11, 2021



Ah, I see I got caught with my own camera, and yet another girl on the beach. I seem to have been hanging out with her there at Little Beach.





My Mother's Hand

Before we can see
we feel our mother's hand
and when we can see
we see our mother's hands
feeding us

~~

Oct 11, 2021



Chicken Coop

That damned chicken coop
next to the outhouse
gave us eggs
gave us egg salad
and Ed's dad
took care of them
I sure as hell didn't

~~

Oct 11, 2021



Her Golden Hair

An October morning
and the rising sun
scatters diamonds
across the grass
and under the pines
are patches of gold

It was a morning
like this
that we went walking
and the sun shone
through her golden hair
We walked and talked
and I gazed at her face

That evening
on a grandmother's couch
we gave each other
the gifts you never give again
In the last of my life
on mornings like this
I think of that girl
and the gifts we gave

~~

Oct 12, 2021

Edna's Glasses

Eeee, I am so happy. There is Edna with her seagull glasses. And her greenhouse. My mother drew a cartoon about the plants attacking Edna. She was valiantly trying to fight them off.

That Conservatory beside the University Centre? They were going to demolish it and I sent a letter to the President and others telling them the story of Edna's visit. She had a mastectomy and smuggled a cactus from Isreal, but her sticky fingers were not sticky in the Conservatory. Too much respect. They saved the building.

Stories are powerful.



Early 70s

This is as it was shot, didn't want to fix the horizon because this shot is the first one that hit me in the gut. The one that told me I could see in my own way. Turn her around so she's looking into the frame, straighten it, all the many things that "make a good shot" and it would be gone. I have seen tens of thousands of "good shots" that fit all the rules, but none have stuck in my head like this shot.



Grandpa under a broody sky



Leonard Cohen

I used to want to be Leonard Cohen
And then I thought I was him
But it never helped
and suddenly I realized
that he was unhappy

~~

Oct 14, 2021

That Evening

That evening
I slipped into her bed
and she didn't wake up
Just snuggled a bit closer
made a mrrr noise
and the other little noises
she made
while she slept

~~

Oct 15, 2021

Restful

She would shift
and move
and sometimes bounce
and every time
I would wake up

I never had such restful nights

~~

Oct 15, 2021

What Was That

What was that
I said to Brenda
It was a wardrobe you built
and it went to my parent's cottage
And that chest
That went to my sister

I worry about leaving this world
with nothing of me remaining
but looking around this house
looking at old photos
There are bits and pieces of me
all around, as there are
of my parents and grandparents

Not just a bloodline
but a line of things made with love
and given with kindness
or taken up in remembrance
to be cared for
and passed on
This was your great grandfather's box

~~

Oct 15, 2021

Sleep My Love

Sleep my love
she said

And when I woke
she was gone

~~

Sept 11, 1990

We Arrived

It was nice
the day she asked
to use my nail clippers
I felt we had arrived

~~

Sept 13, 1990

Gently

To hold a woman's love,
To hold a man's life
Is to hold a bird
Too tightly and it is crushed
Too loosely, and it flies away

To hold a woman's love
You must not try,
or concentrate or even think
But watch, and listen
See, use a baby's eyes
Feel, use a baby's hands.

~~

Dec 30, 1985

God's Gift

God placed us here
then went away
He does not look
He does not see

He does not listen
He does not hear
God gave us life
then went away

Man stands alone
to live this life
He has no help
He has no guide

He lives for nothing
He lives for no one
Man stands alone
and thus he dies

To live well
To have a good death
This is man's hope
This is God's gift

~~

December 30, 1985

My Grandfather's House

After we left my father
we journeyed to Tillsonburg
to live with our mother
and her parents
my sister and I

I remember the basement window
the hole for it, lined with steel
the panes below ground
because grandfather had dug by hand
long after the house had been built
the dark, unknown basement
I was never allowed to see

I remember the bathroom window
looking out over the back yard
along the edge of the house
added on, with the den,
by grandfather
and the window had three holes
covered with a pivoted block
used to open it,
and it was rarely open

And I remember the tap
coming out of the ground
by the front porch
the spigot a foot high
over Spike's dish

I remember my only friend
drinking from his dish
as I drank from the tap
our noses touching
his dry and mine wet

And I remember my dog
his sad eyes, when I was sad
his retreat under the snowball bush
and his company, wherever I was
his company.

My grandfather built a bench
around a huge maple tree
beside the path
that led to the gully
A huge maple tree
and I lay for hours
my back against its trunk
sitting on a root

There were pigeons
under the eaves
In a box I'll never understand
they nest there still
at least twenty generations
from the first time I heard them

I remember the red bricks
and the tin roofs
I remember the veranda
over the porch

the veranda I slept on
when it was too hot inside
I remember the winters
when it was too cold to sleep
and I remember I always did

I remember the back yard
the three scotch pines
and between them
the bird-bath of sheet metal
round and ringed with rubber
flat to the ground

And I remember the bird feeder
raised from the yard
by a pole through the middle
to keep the squirrels out
and I remember well
the covered feeder, only for birds
filled with squirrels

There were two back kitchens
both of wood
one with my dog's house
under my grandfather's workbench
his entrance from outside
under a canvas flap
I remember the vice
on the bench
and the plank floor
over the well
in the other end of the room

I remember that well
covered outside with cement
but revealed
through the cracks in the floor
I remember the far room
seen only in glimpses
filled with wonderful things
seen through a cracked door
and a dusty windowpane

I remember the pear trees
one on each corner
of the back kitchens
one with a swinging
hanging upside down branch
and the yellow jackets in the fall,
One on the edge of the gully
where the path around the house
split with the path
that went along the side of the hill
to the first flat
filled with beautiful flowered weeds
of a hundred colours
and the remains of a thousand fires
marked by cinders, black cans and glass
I remember the crazy angle of that tree
out over the gully
and beside it, an old race-car
given to us from a fairground ride
by my sister's godfather

Beyond the flat I remember the hill
covered with oak, and the path
down to the creek
and I remember playing there
swimming in the hole at the bend
swimming further upstream
in sight
of the swinging bridge
that lay at the bottom of the other path
the gravel one dropping past the maple
on the other side of the house
I remember the vine hanging from the oak
we swung on
and the path up the clay cliffs
to my cousin's house

I remember the huge willow
by the creek, climbing onto the limb
the first, not five feet high,
and wide, covered with shaggy bark
you could sleep on it
I remember the day my mother
caught us skinny dipping
and asked her blushing nephew
and embarrassed son
to pose for a picture

I remember the path to the barn
the cracked cement sidewalk
between the driveway
and the border, beside the field
that was fallow a decade before I saw it

but still surrounded by rusty page fence
it was only thirty feet wide
and beyond it the gully, my gully

I remember the barn
and the hole beside the doors
my cousin and I used
because it was locked
I remember the pegs in the beams
the grey wood
the stone cellar
and the hay loft
I remember the canoe
slung from the roof
and the smell of shellac
the smell of my grandfather's business

I remember the garden
the walnut trees
and the line of cedars
along the top of the gravel path
I remember the porch pillars
and the handle to turn the aerial

But most of all
I remember the wooden gutter
leaning up against the corner
catching the rain from the eaves
I remember the moss that grew on it
when it was wet
the little rivulets
down its slope
and its gradual disintegration
each piece rearranged over the years
to catch the rain
each piece in turn rotting away
and I wonder
if I looked in that corner
whether I'd find a piece
of that old wooden gutter
hidden among the ferns
in the garden

~~

Kim Taylor, date unknown

Toast

The best thing about toast
is that when you're done
you can make the fish face
and smell the butter
on your moustache

~~

Kim Taylor's Beard Oct 18, 2021

How She Smelled

She left for a few days
and I found myself
wandering into the places
she spent her time

Just to smell her
Just to remember
how she smelled

~~

Oct 18, 2021

Groundhog Day

Groundhog Day
or any of those time-loop stories
where you repeat the past
to learn some lesson
is closer to real life
than an arrow
from past to future
with you riding on it

I go past and past
and past again
seeking reasons
finding lessons
Why did I do that
Why am I a jerk
And each time I go back
I see a bit more clearly
how I got here

And each time
I am a little more content
with what I was
and what I am
and what I might be

Looking at the stories
I had in my head
and realizing like worms
in an apple
they have carved out the sweet
and left only bitter

~~

Oct 18, 2021

Never Forget

I can remember saying
I will never forget this moment
I will never forget her
I don't need a photograph
I don't need to write this down
How could I forget

~~

Oct 18, 2021

Third Person

To read yourself
speak in the third person
and that name
Ariel

What a strange feeling
to be charactered into a story
but I suppose I see

That breakup happened
to the other guy
Sad story
but not mine

~~

Oct 18, 2021

Not Too Long

Please don't be gone
too long my love
Too long and I learn
to get along without you
Too long and I forget
I can't live without you
And I don't want that

~~

Oct 19, 2021

Lorna

I was on a bike trip out east, and my first wife was not yet living with me. I was in PEI and she was somewhere in Ontario, possible Lake Superior. It ended badly (my fault) but it started gently and with huge promise, in fact it came upon me slowly and deeply. Perhaps this was written in that melancholy mood you get on a long road trip, but it's no less true for that.



You Come To Me

Not often
these past years
has a poem come to me
and stayed
waiting to be written
I've had poems
and poems of you
but never remaining
long enough for me
to capture them
This one is strange
a demand
through rainy days
to write of you
Say what you mean to me
and how much I need you
close to me
my selfish wish
to have you by me
always

But many men
with many words
have said this thing before
and something repeated
is often
something meaningless

so here I sit
dew falling on my back
hunched under a streetlamp
while behind me
lovers stare at the harbour
and at Charlottown
I sit politely facing the park
looking west I think
Fifteen hundred miles
to where you sit
or sleep
the sun just setting for you
the moon a bit higher
and wonder how to tell you
something you probably know
trying to find some words
that still hold a meaning
while part of my mind
tells me
“she knows
she’s not blind and
can see your eyes”

Still

I sit and write
slowly realizing the poem
isn't really for you
but, as always
for me
to bring me
in my images
a bit closer to you
to let me think closely
of you
so that when I sleep
maybe I'll dream
that you're beside me

~~

August 26-28 1979



I am drawing to the end of the written journals I made in the late 70s. I can see that I am shifting back to poetry.

Here is an undated, untitled poem on an index card slipped into the last journal.

What You Find

You are, of course, correct
it won't work
like a child in harness
trying to explore
it won't happen
Not can't but won't

Paradox
Indian Shaman
giving birth to himself
you look for problems
you find them
you don't want it to work
it won't

~~

Unknown date (late 70s)

Brautigan's Library

We need Brautigan's library
A place for our books
To be put
Out of reach of readers
We just put them there
And no one will touch them again
except maybe the Librarian
But that's all right
He understands our books.

~~

July 8, 1976

My books and poems have remained in Brautigan's library for a very long time. They are just now peeking out on a strange world.

I just thought about a story

I just thought about a story
about music
But I can't remember it
So I won't tell you
But you would have liked it.

~~

July 6, 1976

I turn the pages of these small notebooks, kept for decades in a closed briefcase. Put there by my mother, kept lovingly for the day I might want them again.

As I turn the pages the stale cigarette smell reminds me of her.

I'm Rather New at This Equality

for Naughty

You'll have to forgive me
I'm rather new at this equality
mixed with love thing
I'll try to please you but I may forget
to let you please me
If I get mad at the wrong things
or not at all when I should
and if I get a little possessive at times
Please remember
I'm very young
~~
July 8, 1976

But Would it be Worth it

You think of all the people inside you
Who'll never get out
They're lost to time
You think of the few you could save
But would it be worth it
Would they survive the rescue
in your world

~~

July 11, 1976

Riding a Ten Speed

Riding a ten speed a fly
Can feel like a rat-turd
Fired from a pellet gun

~~

July 11, 1976

Katleen

You know so much
my new-born woman
from across the ocean
with your pretty face and your
pretty breasts

You know more of me our only night
than I'll ever know of you
I don't please you much but
oh you please me
with your tiny white teeth
raking me like a siamese on a
scratching pole

~~

July, 1976

Sleep When You Can

Sleep when you can
and eat when you must
Force your body to extremes
When you are able
And always stop for beauty

~~

July 1976

Back Pain and Puritan Shame

Someone told me long ago
and half forgotten
about putting a vibrator (good for
back pain and puritan shame)
on a turntable

No one can remember why, but
we all laughed like hell

~~

July 1976

Beyond Your Basement Window

for Lori

We hang
between the bathroom light
and the blackness
beyond your basement window,
together

And I know the darkness
of the far reaches of your mind
and it scares me
I reach for a switch
flooding the room with light

We catch different visions
I see you from across the room
naked on your bed
trembling with an inner battle
and I
holding you, afraid for your life,
my mind, trying to reach into you
to bleed off the pressure

Thinking faster than is possible
you see only light

~~

Dec 22, 1976

The Bright Eyed Girls

Where are all the bright eyed girls
those clean cut students of my youth
The blond haired girls
quick minded girls
who come in from a walk
to a colourful room, artistically mussed
Never sweating
rosy cheeked
always laughing, forever happy

I ask the women here
Quick minded, yes
But red-eyed with late nights
coming home, chilled
resenting the time spent on walks
to rooms more dirty than messed
Rosy cheeks
from nights in the pub
trying to smile again
forever sad

~~

Dec 23, 1976

It was horrifying to see the bright eyes of the semester before turned into shambling elders, beaten by work and by relationships that began in joy and ended in agony within months. This was written at the end of my second semester of University. I wasn't the only one who went too deep too fast.

We Grew Up

I go to visit
the distant past
A real country
of real people
but a place where
you cannot stay

It is a place of were
We were once there
Were once living together
but no more
No more can we talk
except in my imagination
except in my dreams

Oh you wonderful women
and you amazing friends
and those who were both
I return to speak once more
and learn again
the lessons you taught me

But I cannot stay
much as I would like
Yet each time I return
the love and affection
remains for a little while
The lessons remain

Forgive my intrusion
into what we were
I need to be reminded
of women who gave
as good as they got
of friends who had my back
even when I thought I was alone

But mostly I need to understand
that I meant the best
that I tried to help
even though I was not equipped
being in need of help myself
Yet we made it to change
We grew up

~~

Oct 21, 2021

Just to Make Sure

She lies beside me
I can feel her breast
under my hand
Yet I open one eye
to look at the back
of her ear
Just to make sure

I could stay here
for the rest of my life
content
with my chin tucked
into her shoulder
soaked in the scent
of her hair

~~

Oct 21, 2021

Kicking the Props

I left high school
kicking against the props
trying to find something
probably myself

My mother was right
When I arrived at University
I had no filters
wide open to all experience
and it hurt like hell

I never found a filter
but I found a wall
with a massive gate
A wall to bounce off
But that gate
when it opened
You jumped right down my throat
and it hurt like hell

Well intentioned
I meant the very best
I tried to help
but that damned gate
left me no protection
and so, open and closed
I never found the balance
and it hurt you
when it slammed shut

~~

Oct 21, 2021

My Nine O'clock Shoes

Here it is again
shitting on my brain
My nine o'clock shoes
and my eight o'clock blues
I'm losing bits of time again

Here I am and sane
here's the snow again
My nine o'clock shoes
disappear and I lose
a little bit of that sane again

Here it is again
Here it is again
My nine o'clock shoes
My eight o'clock blues
and all of my pieces of time again

Time is here and then
eight turns into ten
Time drifts away
All that's left of the day
are my eight o'clock blues again

Faces turn and end
places will suspend
themselves in the sky
I believe it's a lie
and my eyes have gone wrong again

Here it is again
Here it is again
My nine o'clock shoes
My eight o'clock blues
and all of my pieces of time again

Here it is again
cycles in my brain
My nine o'clock shoes
may reach places I choose
if I lose no more of my time again

Here it is again
Here it is again
My nine o'clock shoes
My eight o'clock blues
and all of my pieces of time again

~~

Jan 14, 1976

"Hey you Bastard"

I looked up and thought
Oh Shit
she was looking at something
pinned to my wall

"This is MY poem
I know because you gave it to me
what's it doing clipped to her photo
Look, I never minded
that you were sleeping with her
when you were sleeping with me
but that's MY poem"

But it didn't have a name on it
and I couldn't figure it out
by the date
and beside, you're forty-five years
out of date yourself

She started to fade
back to my memory
but I could hear
"That's MY poem you bastard"

~~

Oct 21, 2021

Morning After Blues

Oh the party of last night
there was a party here all right
There was a party all last night
Here come the morning light

And the morning after blues
Yes the chilly shower blues
The seventh coffee blues
It's the morning after blues

The get-it-started fight
that buggered-knee-up right
a how-ya doin' night
Here come the morning light

And the morning after blues
To win I have to lose
and nothing on me moves
It's the morning after blues

Oh the beery carpet night
all the girls were looking right
through my bleery eyelid sight
Here come the morning light

And the morning after blues
Oh lord the girls I choose
the what-do-I-say-to-her dues
It's the morning after blues

~~

Mar 12, 1976

Making a timeline of the past and learning from that

I mean seriously
in a life of 65 years
how much damage
could I have done
in two or three

~~

Oct 21, 2021

Like So Much Dirty Laundry

I'll never know
All the reasons you left
All the explanations you
piled in the corner of my room
I'll never know all the words
and the emotions
and all the movements of
your life

~~

Poem found in a pile of my own poems, Dawne's writing. Jan
30, 1976

I found this poem beside me when I woke up that morning so long ago. I know Dawne wrote it and until finding it again had forgotten what a friend she was, and how deeply she cared for me, looked after me. A friend with benefits indeed, mostly my benefit.

The Night You Came to Visit

I'd wake him...
but he wouldn't want to talk
In the hazy mist of "half awake"
he'd just want someone
to hold
to be near
I know that feeling

So I'll let him sleep
his deep sleep
And hope it brings pleasanter things
better and brighter dreams
than daytime
tends to do

No hidden reason why I don't
want to stay
- it's that time of the "female" cycle
I've run out of "feminine" protection
and I've got to get home

Are there no mysteries any more
-must we always bear our
souls and bodies to the world
Somehow the world isn't worth that

~~

February 1977

I Have Measured my Life

I have measured my life
in coffee and in books

Staring out windows
in small cafes
watching the outside world
while nurturing the inner

Hands curled around a cup
taking the warmth into my hands
on a cold day

Thankful for my private world
walled around
by the rim of that cup

~~

Oct 21, 2021

Counting Sheep

Countless hours
I spent beside her
sleeping

Countless hours
and I remember
none of them

~~

Oct 22, 2021

I Don't Know You Any More

I don't know you anymore
you're an old draft
thrown in the garbage
crumpled and forgotten

Someone plucked you out
and smoothed the creases
Now you're presented to me
as something vaguely familiar
even worth evaluation

And I go over the same ground twice

~~

Dec 20, 1976

Prometheus Wishes to Take Back His Gift. Adam Declines

Christ it's cold outside
I wish I had the warm latitudes
of your mind
to thaw my soul
while we sit safe
in front of this fire

The wind seems anxious
to get at me here
It strikes the walls
with a force that bends the light
of the moon, sends it dancing
across the snow, a jester
for a fickle King

I can hear the ice form
on the lake
Over the four hundred yards
the sound comes to me
the crack of a bullwhip
wielded by a god.

Huge titan sent north
from ancient Greece to punish
some minor deity not to be found
The god casts about over the lake
searching, throwing out his arm
impatiently waiting for me
to bear my chest to him

I am safe in this place
the wooden walls protect me
I laugh at him
god who knows only stone
we are each alone here
each out of place
and the wind would tear at us both

He cannot feel the wind
protected by a master
more powerful than the Northern King
I have my walls
and my fire
but my soul is slowly knowing ice
a different sort than the titan's anger

Ice you know so well
you, who can caress it away
you are my power
my focus in this life
All spells are woven from your thread

Fear not for me
the door is strong, the walls thick
and I am the source of all patience

I shall wait out this god
whose angry glance can freeze
the blood of the eagle in flight
I shall wait out the wind
savage lackey, one day I shall rule
and harness its power

My gentle muse
you give me this talisman -
my clothing, my sustenance
I wait for you here

In the morning
the wind will have fled
all around me will be silence
but the ice on the lake
growing thicker
harder than the glass it resembles

I will walk unseen in the light
to the water's edge
driving through the ice
I will take the water that cannot now
be kept from me

~~

Dec 23, 1976

Fresh Linen

The day before Christmas
and there is a fresh linen cloth
laid ready for tomorrow's meal
All the purity and smoothness
I looked for in her
At my place, a year old stain

~~

Dec 24, 1976

Afternoon Coffee Alone

I sit beside the register
gazing out at the winter
I'm drinking afternoon coffee alone
thinking of the peace
that a kitchen table can bring

I wrap my hands around my cup
drawing warmth and comfort
A spiritual act
time measured only by
the level of heat
on my fingers

~~

Dec 27, 1976

In The Morning Light

And in the morning light
when we both rise
I watch you rub the sleep
from pale grey eyes

I trace the softness
of your body's lines
and feel the smoothness
under dawning skies

Just why you stay with me
I'll never see
But if you ever leave
I'll cease to be

alive, you make me hear the wind
you make me feel the sun
and if this boy should need someone
you know I'll always need your love

And in the dawning light
I watch your eyes
and feel the depth that ever
makes me wise

You touch me gently and
I realize
the things I feel for you
are never lies

I'll always be with you
in morning skies
I'll feel the colour
of your pale grey eyes

My girl you make me hear the wind
you make me feel the sun
and if this boy should ever need someone
you know I'll always need your love

~~

Feb 21, 1977

All In All

All in all she said
having him with me
is worth falling into the can
once in a while

~~

Apr 23, 1977

Dream #1 (Diane)

She's breathing in her sleep
and the air trembles as
I straddle a chair and watch

A frown passes her face
I wonder what thought
or dream troubles her
She opens her eyes and I fall
through their liquid brown depths

A long time I hung in warmth
not part of any reality until
she sees me and creates a room
The fire is old enough to burn
without our attention
I sit by her feet, my legs tucked
as I rest my head on her knee

She strokes my hair as she turns her gaze from the window that
is filling with snow, to the fire. Saying something in a voice as
gentle as a whisper. It floats into me and I answer with a
movement of my body so soft I'm not quite sure I made it, and
she hears me. I close my eyes and drift into sleep, thinking of
her deep brown eyes.

I wake to her hand
brushing a strand of hair across my face
She watches me from the bed

She tells me she felt
the air tremble as she
watched me sleep

I reach for her hand
~~

Dream #2 (Mary)

I wake to a dream

I reach for you and you're there
warm, a little sticky (as you should be)

Offshore drilling rig
(here is my derrick)
three platforms, I'm on the nearest

Complication of metal, cable and flesh
You say you're sore but
this is an ass I've not explored
you won't notice -- and you do of course

I roll away from a protest as I slip
out of REM and back
under the waves

From a dream to sleep

~~

Oct 13, 1976

But My Knees Went a Little Weak (Darlene S.)

Someone is here for me
I was told
And I rounded the corner wondering

My knees went a little weak
Did you see my face go pale
and then glow in your light

I thought I had lost you
so very long ago
but you were here
and it hadn't changed
at all

I must always have known it
because I didn't even blink
(but my knees went a little weak)

~~

Oct/76

How I Miss You

Sit back and close your eyes
and I'll tell you how I miss you
I'll tell you how I love you so

Picture a day
A summer's fading day
Can you feel the sun going down
at the end of a summer's day

Picture a door
that you open to find a rain
the gentle summer rain
that comes like the breeze
through the birches outside the door

Can you see that light
that comes from the trees
from the fields and the grass
the clarity of each leaf
all demanding your attention

Can you smell the air
that summer rainy air
calling to the evening

Picture the sounds of the rain
the sounds of the wind
See the glow of your land
feel the grass under your feet
Feel the scent become part of you
as you start to melt
into this country
that wants you so

~~

Aug 17, 1977

September Beginning

It's another Sung painting day
misty rain making everything grey
getting into my head
a week of slow-time
where nothing ages and nothing changes
and I'll live forever until I die
Tomorrow I'll start my life again

~~

Sept 30, 1977

A Wish for a Sad Friend I've Never Met

The end of a semester
and another affair
dropping down the tubes

This time I'm only a spectator
as the girl beside me
in a second floor library lounge
turns back and forth the same
two pages of her notes
Not seeing a word she wrote there
so carefully weeks before
when she was happy

I'd like to tell her to look
through the words
and remember those happy times
and the joy she's paying for now
but I don't have the voice
as I watch her eyes mist
looking toward the place
where her lover sits

He comes to say a few words
that I can't hear
and then leaves
I watch her hands
frustrated and nervous
angry with wanting to reach for him
and not having the strength

And I think again about the long
winter nights they had together
so full of peace, happy with each other
those nights that make them
hurt each other so much
and I wish again
that I could tell her to remember the nights
and leave the cold
the grey morning light
alone

~~

April 4, 1978

This one is too good not to share. Written while in a lumber camp in N. Alberta, to a girl back home of course. I love this one, it's so simple, and reading these so many decades later, it's like reading someone else's work. Hell it is someone else.

Come Live With Me

Come live with me
I'll paint outside
you paint inside
We'll kiss at the windows

~~

May 29, 1978

And yet, on that same evening, sitting on the bed in the bunkhouse, I wrote this.

I'm The Rubber Band

I'm the rubber band
I'm a kid's toy aeroplane
you give me power

~~

May 29, 1978

This to the same girl. Did I intend that image? Maybe unconsciously. How do you power a kid's aeroplane? By winding it up, and oh boy did she know how to wind me up.

Is It True

I'm staring at a wristwatch
that's tacked up on the wall
I can't remember what it is
or if it's there at all

I'm staring at a memory
that's etched behind my eyes
I can't see that it was true
or if it was a lie

So long ago
so long ago
I think I see your hand
I think I hear your breath
and feel you by my side
I don't know if it's a lie

I feel you by my side
and stroke your velvet back
and kiss your velvet lips
and let my life go by
to feel you by my side
and I don't know if it's a lie

~~

Oct 24, 1978

She Walks By

She walks by me
like a carload of undertakers
on the way
to an after-work drink

~~

May 2, 1979

Forty Three Years

I finished a book for you
that I started
in 1978
and it feels
like you're slipping away
already

~~

Oct 24, 2021

The Clockwork Love Affair



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Not Losing Her

I put my old notebooks
back in the briefcase
my mother saved for me
and despite turning
each and every page
it still smells
like stale cigarettes

I was afraid
I would lose
even that small bit of her

~~

Oct 24, 2021

Thinking of You

Thinking of you
A beach in winter
the sand frozen

~~

January 13, 1982

The Albion

Seven years
the same bar
seven years
and I still try to open
the left door
the one locked
these seven years

~~

Jan 13, 1982

To Eunice

You crept up
on gentle feet
on raucous feet
to surprise me

You took me
slowly
in hidden ways
sliding into my life
places vital and unseen
until no thought
no decision
is uncoloured by your eyes
the shape of your hands
the smell of your hair

All my thoughts
seem tinged
by the way you laugh at me
The way I see the world
has something to do
with the dimples on your bum

~~

Apr 2, 1985

For Jane

Ah

Well

In the pit of my stomach

I feel it

One of the last free spirits

A bit of myself, young

Jane

Pregnant now

~~

Aug 21, 1988

Signs of Pam

In my shop
little things speak to me
Nothing out of place
but shifted

Ah, this is here
The Pamurai has been
using my shop

~~

Oct 25, 2021

Old Letters

What does it mean
that, reading old letters
it upsets me so
to see how much
I was loved
I was missed
How fondly remembered

Have I lived so long
in my own head
that I took on too much blame
Is it that
I didn't see that love
at the time
that it could have worked

Damnit
It did work
for as long as it worked
What could I have done
if they had all stayed
if I'd asked them all
to stay

Would I be an old man
rambling around a commune
trying to remember names
trying to remember which children
belonged to which old woman

Come on old man
you couldn't have them all
It would have flown apart
just like it did
Just like it did

~~

Oct 25, 2021

Return Letter

My Darling Girl
I kept all your letters
and though the last
was dated in the '80s
I never stopped
thinking of you

If you ever see this
please know that I'm fine
and I hope you are the same
I hope your life
has been as good as mine
and I send much love

~~

Oct 25, 2021

I Tried My Best

I looked
finally looked
into the old notebooks
where I couldn't look before
I looked
to see how bad I was
how sad I made them
Hoping to see myself
in brutal honesty

The worst time of my life
and what did I find
I found 19 year olds
beating each other up
because they were in love
And I found letters
that said I was a friend
that I helped
long after we had parted

You know
as an end of life project
as a final look back
I didn't do so bad
I tried to help
I tried to be there
and sometimes I was

Right now it's hard to say that
so I write it
hoping that soon
I can say it out loud
I tried my best
and sometimes I helped
and I was loved for it

~~

Oct 25, 2021

First Morning Tea

Elfen face
Blond hair
Short
Tucked behind the ears
drinking tea
both hands on the cup
elbows on the table
Looking up
under those bangs

Early morning hello
Across the table
after a late night
and a small bed
Sleepy eyes

~~

Oct 13, 1992

A memory of Penny, from 1975 perhaps, when it was new,
when I was new.

Dael's Garret

Cold winter night
two feet of snow
apartment walls leaking
stray bits of wind
striking the back of the neck

A narrow bed
under the eaves
roof sloping down
to meet the edge
back cold against the ceiling

She slept curled
between knees and shoulders
tiny little furnace
under two quilts
breathing softly
bum hitting stomach

A cold morning
still dark
trying to slip out quietly
two arms reaching for a neck
gently protesting

My neck felt warm
all the way home
the long walk
thorough the snow
un-noticed

~~

Oct 13, 1992

A memory of Dael from many years earlier, the night before we
left for Alberta.

Three Days

The sheets were grey
there was no television
A chair
A desk
A clock radio
and the bed
Toilet down the hall

Three days
I waited there
for her to come back

The next time I saw her
was ten years later
Two kids
and a new car
stopped at a light

I waited until
she drove away
Then crossed the road

~~

Feb 20, 1993

This did not happen, to the best of my recollection. But it happened at least twice.

Never Said Goodbye

Sometimes invited
but mostly without a word
She would show up
at the door
Or come home with me
if we met somewhere

Sometimes she would stay
sometimes not
A mood
another friend
Who could say exactly
what moved her

We
were never a topic of discussion
Sometimes philosophy
Sometimes the arts
Often we said nothing at all
Comfortable
not with the silence
just the absence of words

We never said goodbye
but she hasn't come
for many years
And mutual friends
have moved away

The news dried up
leaving the memories
of her hair
her nose, her arms
Legs impossibly long

But most of all
her presence
somewhere around the place
quiet
like a cat

Here and not here
on her own business
that sometimes
brought her to my door

~~

July 18, 1993

All For The Love of a God

All for the love of a God
she said
am I in this state
Alone and shunned
by my family
and my town
Here with my young son
who will never have
a true friend

All for the love of a God
You see
the Gods don't live long
and they are weak
But they are so beautiful
that you can't help
but to be kind to them
when they fall in love
Even if they whither away
as they create a new life

~~

July 20, 1993

Janice

How long ago was it
that we were together
How far away
from my life now
How far away
from your life

Should I remember you
I do
sometimes
But should I make an effort
to remember your hair
The curve of your nose
the scar on your belly

We laughed sometimes
fought
made love
screwed too
We walked for a time
through our lives
Then we didn't

You married
had children
perhaps thought of me
perhaps not
And one day I read
in a magazine
a short announcement

Suddenly I remember you
instead of think of you
No longer free
to wonder what you're doing now

Should I
You had a husband
children I never met
Surely they remember
Does it help
That I do too

~~

Sept 1, 2003

A Dream of Course

Several old girlfriends
and ex wives
were around last night

They all got along well
and seemed to be taking care of me
very nice of them I thought

I never tried
to be an asshole
just had a bit of trouble
Sorting my life

I was pleased to see
they got along so well
About the closest to cats
was a small remark
about one of them losing some weight

That's what's different
I thought

~~

11/4/27

First Try

Rainy Sunday morning
and the first sip of coffee
is like the first kiss
of a high school girl
on her first date
with the first guy
who will ever break her heart

Wow did that one
ever go off the rails fast

~~

May 15, 2011

As You Fall Asleep

I sleep beside you
and hear your breath change
as you fall asleep
That twitch

I know when you are about to shift
and when you get too hot
So I lift the covers
and wait for the small movement
that says "put them back"

~~

Oct 29, 2021

Flying

Look Ma, I'm flying. This is one of the throws that you really do have to go airborne or get your shoulder ripped out.



Please be Careful

She came in
I'm late zip me up
and was gone
I was asleep
did she come in
or am I dreaming
Please be careful
driving
or on the back of a goose
Please be careful

~~

Oct 30, 2021

I think this is the best photo of me I've run across, I've got hair, front caps, and I'm in super shape it looks like. Plus I've got a baby in my arms. Now THAT is a good looking man.



That photo was in 1981, and I was with Lorna. Seeing what I looked like, and thinking of her brought it all back in a rush. She was too good for that good looking boy. No, I wasn't good enough for her.

You Loved Me

You loved me
for a long time
and I barely noticed you
Just a friend on the team

But in a time of hurt
and loneliness
you were there for me
And as you moved closer
I became used to you

Eventually I noticed you
I loved you deeply
as you loved me
but old habits die slow
and I didn't treat you well

I expected you to attend
to be there when I needed
and silent when I didn't
I tested constantly
Do you love me
Do you love me now

Somewhere in there
you wanted more
just as I gave less
so you pushed
and because I knew
you pushed those buttons
I became even more angry

Fights are not communication
they are the opposite
yet you would take even that
over the silence I gave you
and I became even more angry

I destroyed a headboard
I dented a plaster lath wall
Until finally, one day while
I washed dishes
and you stood behind
pushing those buttons

Until finally that day
I spun and grabbed your throat
Not gripping, my hands screaming
as they tried to squeeze
and let go both
I let go

But I could not stay with you
You had no idea the turmoil
in my mind
No idea what I could do
and you would stay
and you would let me
I had to say goodbye

There was no going past
no going through that moment
that day I grabbed you
No forgiveness for my hands
on that so-loved neck
and I had to say goodbye

~~

Oct 31, 2021

The nature of subjective time.

A thousand years ago I took a metaphysics course in the summer. The prof said he was not going to teach classes for three people, go away and give me a couple-three, or even one essays.

You know I waited until the very last moment and wrote all night. Got a good mark, if I remember, and the topic was the physiological basis of time. Maybe. Something like trying to deal with the space between knowing something is happening physically, and knowing it consciously. Maybe.

The point is that time is ours, it was defined by us. It doesn't live in calendars, watches or your smartphone, those are just ticks, they aren't time.

I have spent the last month going through a five year stretch of my life, five out of 65, and yet in my head it was a lifetime, the time between starting University and having my first wife move in with me. In that time a huge number of things happened in my head. They could not have happened outside my head, there's only 24 hours a day, but it sure felt like a massive chunk of time.

Time is probably something to do with change, and I changed massively during those years. Let me give you an example, I would have told you without hesitation that my relationships with some of the girls I knew then, lasted four or five years. One, I would have said at least that and more, if not twice that. I started a project of gathering all the notes, poems, photographs from that time to slap myself into a calendar definition of time. This girl? More likely about six months of intimacy in spurts over two years. Then another forty years of having her bounce around inside my head.

Time doesn't live in calendars and watches. It's in your head.

I was convinced that I had tortured for years some of the girls I loved back in the late '70s. When I put it on a calendar it turned out to be a tick on my life clock. Yes, it was awful but it wasn't all awful, there was a lot more ecstasy than agony, and they gave as good as they got. You have no idea how liberating it has been to get away from the clock in my head.

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