

PATHOS · HUMOR · HISTORY · CREATIVE NON-FICTION

CALLAHAN COUNTY STAR SPOTLIGHT

WRITERS SHOWCASE

(All submitters retain ownership)

American Life in Poetry Column 248

BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006

Many if not all of us have had the pleasure of watching choruses of young people sing. It's an experience rich with affirmation, it seems to me. Here is a lovely poem by Tim Nolan, an attorney in Minneapolis.

At the Choral Concert

The high school kids are so beautiful
in their lavender blouses and crisp white shirts.

They open their mouths to sing with that
far-off stare they had looking out from the crib.

Their voices lift up from the marble bed
of the high altar to the blue endless ceiling

of heaven as depicted in the cloudy dome—
and we—as the parents—crane our necks

to see our children and what is above us—
and ahead of us—until the end when we

are invited up to sing with them—sopranos
and altos—tenors and basses—to sing the great

Hallelujah Chorus—and I'm standing with the other
stunned and gray fathers—holding our sheet music—

searching for our parts—and we realize—
our voices are surprisingly rich—experienced—

For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth—
and how do we all know to come in

at exactly the right moment?—Forever and ever—
and how can it not seem that we shall reign

forever and ever—in one voice with our beautiful
children—looking out into all those lights.

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Submissions sought to:

Star

P.O. Box 29
Eastland, TX 76448

email: thebairdspotlight@att.net

S.A.S.E. for returns

--WANTED--

20 lines,

double spaced or less

Poetry

Fiction or Non

Each entry with brief biography notes. All must be family oriented; no smut, slander or libel material.

Double Vision

by Ruth York

(This story is continued from our last edition...)

I decided to climb Old Baldy. Once before I had seen some lovely valleys where mists should linger. And it was an easy, well-marked trail.

I got a couple of quick sketches before the sun burned off the mist. Securing the wet papers in a protective case tied to my knapsack, I hiked to the crest of Old Baldy. I ate a sandwich, rested, and watched the cloud shadows on the distant peaks. Then I headed back to camp.

I found Pat at her easel, pastels at hand.

"Get any rest?" I greeted her.

"All day," she answered. "But when I caught myself doodling three pictures in a row, I gave up and came outside."

I laughed. "See, this country is inspiring!"

I watched admiringly as she finished her rendition of the campground ? flashes of color among pines, afternoon sun slanting through branches.

I got out my sketches and saw a startled look cross Pat's face. I looked at my work again. They were good, but ? Had I improved that much while we'd been apart?

Pat looked them over critically. "Nice wet-on-wet effect," she said at last.

I had expected more, and felt deflated. The talk turned, as ever, to the merits of watercolors vs. pastels, of brushes vs. sticks of color, and wet vs. dry. Spontaneity versus control.

Meanwhile I stashed my gear and kindled a camp fire. In short order potatoes roasted in the ashes and steaks sizzled over the coals while Pat tossed a salad. The tall, bearded camper next door, who had introduced himself as Bill Williams, wandered over, wearing red plaid flannel shirt and jeans. We traded dinner for mountain stories until dark. A New Mexico native, he had done a lot of hiking and skiing above Ruidoso.

Next morning I set off to Lake Bonita. Exactly what was I looking for, I asked myself as I hiked along the edge of the placid lake.

I found it when I came upon an isolated cove. A small red and blue tent complimented the forest greens and distant purples reflected in the still water. I propped my board on a stump, dipped water from the lake, wet my brush.

Pleased with the results, I packed up before noon. After lunch with Pat I'd go out again.

Pat had always been my best critic, but after her meager response the previous day, I resolved to control my innate impulse to show off my accomplishments. To my pleasure, Pat asked to see what I'd done.

Feeling oddly vulnerable, I pulled the four watercolor sketches from my knapsack and propped them on the couch. Without looking at Pat, I moved behind her. I was practically holding my breath. This is silly, I thought, and tried to relax.

She looked at each sketch intently. A smothered sound and a slight shake of her head raised my apprehension. I sensed something was wrong. What?

Then she straightened.

"Nat ?" she began, a puzzled look in her eyes.

A knock rattled the trailer door.

"Oh, that's Bill," Pat said, her face clearing magically. "I invited him for lunch. OK?"

"Sure," I said. I put the pictures away thoughtfully.

I'd never seen a knock light such instant pleasure in Pat's face.

From the conversation at lunch, Bill and Pat had spent the morning together, she painting and he evidently admiring each stroke.

"I tell you, that has to be Lake Bonita! Sure you've never been there?"

"We drove past it on the way up," I volunteered.

"I just made up a water scene," Pat explained modestly.

Bill said positively, "I tell you, it's a dead ringer for Bonita. The way she made the light sparkle on the water ? This is some artist you've got for a sister, Nat."

Her cheeks were a becoming pink and a lovely sparkle shone in her brown eyes. The mountains, I asked myself ? or Bill?

I began to feel like the unwanted part of a crowd.

Pat insisted on doing the dishes ? and Bill volunteered to help ? so I packed fresh paper in my backpack and hurried off again, in the pickup this time.

I followed winding lumber roads to Monjou Lookout, a rock fire fighter's observation point. The timber-and-rock lodge seemed to grow right out of the mountain crest. I left the truck in the unpaved parking area and followed the rough stone steps to the top. The lodge, which was living quarters as well as observation tower for a fire spotter, was locked and silent. It had been last time, I remembered, and wondered if it was occupied this summer.

(to be continued.....)

This New Year

All preachers and teachers tell us
There's nothing like a new beginning
Explaining much about the fuss
Regarding such uncertain endings.

So be of good cheer for once each year
New Years promise has good attending
Egg nog and beer expels some fears
For such is the certain intending.

The preachers say and teachers say
Starting anew is so depending
Upon each day along the way
Is spent at constructing and mending.

This New Year and every New Year
Be watchful for things worth remembering
Resolutions and solutions
They both have optimistic trendings.

May this new one be much more fun
Filled with your happiest days unending
Such good will come to see we won
With no complaining or pretending.
By Wendell L. Smith
Eastland, Texas

Have a Safe & Merry Christmas



Writers And Poets!

The Eastland/Callahan County Newspapers announce that the Baird Star will be publishing submitted poetry and short stories. We will also be publishing a literary journal in the near future.

1. We ask for first-time publishing rights. All other rights will remain with the author.
2. There will be no payment, but you will get your works before the general public. We will

be sending sample copies to other organizations, the literary world and libraries for their archives and your notoriety.

3. Short stories should be brief. Poetry should be no longer than 24 lines.
4. Each submission should be typewritten, single spaced, with author's name and contact information in the top right hand corner. You must include a SASE for the return of the submission.

5. Please address all submissions to:

Literary Editor
Eastland/Callahan County
Newspapers
P. O. Box 29
Eastland, TX 76448

email: thebairdspotlight@att.net

