



# In Praise of Poems

National Poetry Month in the U.S. turned 30 years old this April. The event's longevity was inaugurated with a 1996 ceremony featuring former and future U.S. poet laureates and Pulitzer winners. Thank you to the poets who chose to share with our **Smith Mountain Arts Council** this year! Enjoy their creativity. Send applause from you, dear reader, via email to David, Grant, Karen, Mickey, and Neal for participating in this SMAC offering.

"What if poetry can bring you back to wonder, to kindness, to care, to sensitivity, to tenderness? And even in that small moment, isn't that a radical act? Isn't that saving yourself so that you can become stronger? So that you can become braver?" ~ Poet Laureate Ada Limón



## Young Again

Mickey M. Johnson [johnsonmickey7@gmail.com](mailto:johnsonmickey7@gmail.com)

Building castles in the clay, on the creek bank  
Built a boat out of jugs, five minutes it sank.  
Watching the sky, trying to spot a plane  
Where are they headed, our necks crane?

Staying out past dark, lightning bugs  
Didn't worry about shootings, gangs, and thugs.  
Playing hide and seek, for hours on end.  
Find a special place and grab a friend.

Childhood memories, the best of times  
Counting my blessings, nickels, and dimes  
Puffy clouds overhead, holding secrets untold.  
Why, oh why, did I have to grow old

Didn't need anyone to take us anywhere.  
Just jumped on our bike, without care  
No need for money, bottles galore  
On the side of the road, two cents at the store

Puffy clouds overhead, holding secrets untold.  
Why oh why, did I have to grow old

Candy, snacks and drinks, bit of fighting  
Stop at a fishing hole, anything biting?  
Little league baseball, the only sport I knew.  
Everyone played, it was the thing to do.

Swimming in the creek, watch out for the snake.  
Eating wild berries would make my stomachache.  
Building a campfire, cook a fish we caught  
Glad we weren't hungry, harder than I thought.





# Mind Traveler

by Neal Howes [nealhowes@gmail.com](mailto:nealhowes@gmail.com)

When you were young you may  
have been a day dreamer,  
Thinking of all the things you might become.  
But when you're old  
You may become a mind traveler.  
Thinking of all the things you have done.

The young dreamer makes plans and wonders.  
The mind traveler goes back and ponders.  
Once you stop being a dreamer,  
Once you stop being a mind traveler,  
You stop living.

That is why I do both.



# Memories of Army Service

by Grant West (pictured with his Army dad) [bwest96@verizon.net](mailto:bwest96@verizon.net)

I visited the National Army Museum today.  
It brought back memories of places far away,



Often, we were sent far from home.  
But with the Army family we were never alone,  
At times we were deployed for months at a time  
Performing missions most others would gladly  
decline,

I served with soldiers keeping our country free.

All pledging allegiance to uphold the Army creed,

Some days were hard but the work was rewarding.  
It helped to know our families were supporting,

I never questioned defending our Constitution  
Serving our Nation's first and oldest national Institution,

The museum reminds me that all who served were answering a call.  
Throughout the Army's history, all gave some and some gave all,

Displaying personal conviction and unbelievable bravery  
Some gave the last full measure defending this country,

So never forget our freedom is not free.

# Revision

by David Gloudemans, [gloudemansdave@gmail.com](mailto:gloudemansdave@gmail.com)

A bird born without wings could not fly  
But she could sing  
She listened closely to everything  
and made their sounds her own  
That of a spider weaving a web  
The nearly silent wisp of a butterfly  
The patter of gentle rain  
Bright sunlight drying tree bark  
A brown leaf releasing at last  
Snowflakes as they collide  
Even the low hum of water freezing  
She mimicked them as best she could and  
When it wasn't right, she kept singing  
The more she practiced, the quieter she got  
Until, to other birds, she was silent  
But she kept working on  
Her song the world had taught  
The day she got it perfect  
Every note complete  
Her wingless body lifted off the nest and  
Drifted into trees



# It's No Game

by Mickey M. Johnson [johnsonmickey7@gmail.com](mailto:johnsonmickey7@gmail.com)

Take a sip from a can, buzzing bee gives a fright.  
The universe tries my patience, flip the switch no light.

Pump the brakes, pedal goes to the floor.  
Bag of chips half empty, but I wanted more.

Late getting to church, seat open first pew  
I sit down to find it is soaked right thru.  
Finished waxing the floor, sparkling clean.  
Kid runs thru, tracking mud, he's a teen.

All minor things, something to complain about  
Then a rude awakening, times running out.  
Seeing friends pass, way too soon.  
Realizing I too will go, none are immune.

In the autumn of life, here by God's grace  
Feel the breeze in my hair, the sun on my face.  
Simple things taken for granted, now are treasured in  
my heart.  
The game's not over, just slower to start.

The more I live, the less time I have left  
Make the most of each day, cherish every breath.  
I don't pray to be healed, only to be brave.  
God's will be done, take nothing to the grave.

Wear this body out, use it all up.  
My blessings are immense, overfloweth my cup.  
Can't slow down, so much left to do.  
In extra innings, only get a few.

Empty my bucket now, don't wait for the right time.  
Never know when or where, my bell will chime.  
Love hard without shame, the chances will flee.  
Shout loud and tell them what they mean to me.

Know that I did everything, I wanted and more.  
Too many friends leave, while waiting to score  
Swing for the fences, knock it into space.  
Run fast as I can, don't get stranded on base.

Don't care to finish, looking fresh and neat.  
I'll go out looking ragged, exhausted, and beat.  
Don't spill any tears, the pain will soften.  
Rest assured if I wanted it, I did it often.

Tell a story or ten, lie if you want to  
Raise a toast, sing a song, it's up to you.  
I'll be there with you, even on your darkest day.  
Remember I love you, let my light show the way.



# Picture This

by Karen DeBord [debordk@gmail.com](mailto:debordk@gmail.com)

The sunshine gently kisses your forehead  
As you snuggle within the warmth of the bed.

Another day begins and your focus moves only to embrace  
Wonder, kindness, and whispers of grace.

As your brain awakens, you realize there are choices.  
Ignoring the news, social media, and brazen voices.

Boldly stepping outside your snuggly resting place  
Preferring outside sounds to fill your space;  
The birds, the wisping air, dancing bees,  
You curl up sipping warm vanilla-honey tea.

Through the window is revealed an awakening spring.  
That makes you happy.  
Flowering leaves and birds that sing.

These moments breathe life into your core  
Your heart grows warm; your soul restored.

Just picture this.

# The Wonder of Christmas

by Grant West [bwest96@verizon.net](mailto:bwest96@verizon.net)

*I saw a little girl today, as she sat on Santa's lap.  
Her eyes were filled with wonder as she gazed at Santa's cap.  
Her face so innocent and small, but her smile lit up the room.  
You could see she believed in the man in red; her excitement was over  
the moon.*

*My heart was filled with joy as she whispered in his ear.  
Her face lit up with giggles from her childish boundless cheer.  
It made me think and reminded me as I watched the little girl leave.  
No matter our age, the magic of Christmas lies in our ability to  
believe.*

