

A Dinner on the Finger Lakes

The music of a brass band slips upward into the evening air,
notes of jazz, blues, swing, and marches playing with the late summer breeze,
far below drawn-out clouds struck by the sun claimed only a moment ago
by the smooth edge of the valley.
Silky hues fall on down to our checkered tablecloth,
taking on a glow hinting of the golden sunset.
My companions and I uncover baskets of fried chicken and a pan of cornbread,
quickly shuttling the hot food to our plates.
The murmur of friends and families flows among the picnic tables,
punctuated by the ripples of laughter from playing children.
A crescendo from the band, and I am watching their gazebo over my dinner,
the lights sliding around the curves of their instruments.
Bars from long-passed composers snake out into the casual crowd,
tapping out the rhythm of an era gone by.
Sousa marches forth from the gazebo, leading a parade of Gershwin and Berlin, Goodman and Miller.
Every few measures someone must duck the flight of a paper-and-balsa airplane,
sent out from the hand of a gleeful child.
The playful breeze sends an occasional leaf over our way,
freed by a curve of trees tinged with autumn's first drops.
Out past the reaches of the band's melody, the water gives its final laps to the shore,
anchoring a reflection of the sunset-singed sky.
The few remaining boats calmly motor back towards their moorings,
their lights sending a star-like twinkle across the deepening blue.
Sandals are cast off by chatting friends enjoying the cool brush of the village green,
toes conducting a two-beat pattern for a band of green blades.
We are lulled into slipping back, following the retreating sunlight chased out of the valley by the twinkling northern
sky.
Before I surrender to the evening, my ears catch a familiar sound.
My eyes follow, and I find an old biplane sending a lazy rock of his wings to the village sliding by below, cruising
westward, low and slow, out past the edge of the valley.

Baltimore Woods

These footsteps seem familiar, as not too long ago
My father carried me through these woods on weekend mornings,
My perch on his shoulders allowing me vision
Beyond any I had before.

How wondrous it was to be so young,
With each day an adventure that doubled my world,
Each trail and stream an unknown universe
Waiting to be explored.

We listened to the robins and jays call in the day
And owls at night,
Finding pure solace in the purity
Of undisturbed wilderness.

Spring taught me the promise of eternal life,
Of fresh shoots bursting out from under decayed leaves,
The aroma of a sugar house a sweet clue
That sap had begun to flow.

In summer a cool refuge was provided,
Earth and leaves masking the heat of day,
A maple canopy providing comfort
No climate control could afford.

A blaze of freedom greeted us in the fall,
Trees celebrating a glorious season

Roger M. Jones Poetry Contest 2009 – First Place

Of giving life to all flora and fauna
And endless wonder to me.

Winter brought crystalline nights
That threw the majesty of the trees in sharp relief
Against an infinite moonlit sky,
A portal to the grandeur of the cosmos.

I learned the joy of birdsong,
The carefree dribbling of a creek,
The crumble of leaves beneath my feet,
The utopian silence of a forest blanketed in snow.

When I hear my father's voice,
It is filtered through these woods,
These woods that provided
The purest freedom I have known.

Endeavour

A flash of blue and I know the moment is at hand,
Anticipation gets the best of me and I turn away,
But my mother turns me back toward the sea,
Not allowing me to miss this moment.

In silence towering clouds of steam obscure
The object of my apprehension from my sight,
Until flame leaps forth from the base of the beast,
Lifting it into the pure dawn sky.

A pillar of smoke pierces the horizon,
Accelerating upward behind a brilliant shock of light,
A harbinger of the power expanding outward
Testing all in its path.

I am hit by a wave unlike any I could imagine,
More force than sound,
The pent up fury of an eagle
Longing for the sky.

Before I can comprehend the forces unleashed on me
I am left again in silence,
A serene backdrop to the new morning star
Racing eastward to the heavens.