Poetographic Portraits

**Carl Lahser**

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Cross-section through a Rainbow – Corfu, Athens, and Rhodes/Greek Poems

Three Weeks in Berlin

Dickens Christmas - Three Weeks in London

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Do Bears do it in the Woods - Winnipeg

Enterprise II – Calgary, Edmonton, Athabasca

Enterprise North

Vancouver – Vancouver, Victoria, Inland Passage

Newfoundland: Where Have All the Pretty Colored Houses Gone

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Hong Kong 1979

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Hey Momma, When we Goin Again

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Hip3 – Hip Replacement

San Antonio Wildf;owers by the Month

Tracher, Leaaves Don’t Change Color

Thinking of Flying

Total Tripping USA

Total Tripping Canada

Total Tripping Europe

Toral Tripping Asia

Total Tripping Mexico

Total Trripping Alaska to Argentina

This is my first collection of collections of poetry. There may be more like this coming in the future. Got to do something with a couple thousand poems before they jump out of the computer and run amok all over the desk.

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**1**

**Rincon de Carl**

By



Carl Lahser

**2**

The following poems are mine from my point-of-view. Things look different as you approach the top of the hill. The title comes from the corner of the central plaza in Mexican towns where the old men sit to discuss the world news and watch the passing girls.

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**3**

**Rincon de Mirada**

What an old man sees

**1**

**Jogger**

Brown pony tail

Whipping left

then whipping right

in counterpoint to her hips

She looks like the Big Bopper song

“That’s what I like”.

+++++

**2**

**Donde**

It’s cool, man.

A Sarah Vaughn LP

with clicks and scratching

lit by candlelight.

Where are you?

A sparkling spring day

walking through azaleas and dogwood blooms

under a wild blue sky

across a wooden bridge over a roiling creek,

Where are you?

A tropical sunset paints the sky.

Pina Coladas

lobsters sizzling on the grill.

Tropicbirds circling homeward.

Where are you?

Mannnnnn bummer

**+++++**

**4**

**3**

**I WONDER**

black, black hair.

shoulder length.

cascading.

undulating.

reflecting sunny highlights.

would I still be attracted

if I saw her face?

+++++

4

**Glimpses**

I saw her in a Christmas crowd

but she vanished in a sea of bobbing heads.

I called to her in the Plaka in Athens

She turned and spoke to me in Bulgarian.

I bought her favorite drink from across a bar in St Louis

but she was gone before the waiter arrived.

Countless glimpses of her over fifty years

in airports, on busy city streets, on passing busses

She must be gone by now.

Consumed by time.

Absorbed in space.

Existing only in a tiny corner of memory

Unchanged in fifty years.

+++++

**5**

**A Man with Dreams**

He sat at a traffic light

Waiting for a green light

Smiling at other drivers

Macho man with a dream

Clean shaven

Freshly ironed western shirt

Sleeves rolled down

Cuffs buttoned

Slim cut jeans

Wide belt and large silver buckle

Polished Chihuahua cowboy boots

With pointed toes and silver caps

New straw western hat

Shading a lined brown face

Sun grown squint

Hands brown and calloused

Dreaming of a cherry red

Dual wheel diesel pickup

With chrome wheels

And running board

Twin chrome exhaust pipes extending upwards

Alongside the cab

The light turned green

He pushed the old blue bicycle

And began pedaling

Along the bicycle lane.

+++++

**6**

**Full Moon**

A full moon and setting sun

The red and orange of sunset

contrast the pastel gold of moonrise

like chrome and pewter.

I have watched five hundred risings of the moon

-floating over sparse spruce and aspen forests

and cranberry bogs of the arctic;

-surfacing from long tranquil fetches of open ocean

or leaping waves crashing into coral reefs;

-swinging out of steamy jungle green

in the sudden tropical night;

-eerily lighting the ruins of a hundred dead or dying civilizations;

-moon washing maize and squash patches;

Montane valleys; desert vistas;

-from aircraft where rising and setting of the sun or

moon can be played like a yo-yo;

-peeking through breaks in storm clouds.

The best and most exciting full moons

have been and will be

in your company.

+++++

**7**

**First Hours of Fall**

Sitting beside you

on an afternoon in early fall

evoked memories

of sitting beside you

on pleasant afternoons in spring

and of missing you all summer

while you sat beside another.

What a long miserable summer it was.

Fall afternoons

have brought you back.

Where will we be

when winter winds

begin to sigh?

Where will we spend our winter?

+++++

**Hooked (Twenty-fifth anniversary)**

Twenty-five years ago I joined in a wedding.

We cast off with no course set,

not knowing where we were heading.

One thing was certain and can’t be denied –

I was hooked on the bride.

A year or three later, at least, more than one

We were just getting settled when along came our son

It seems like yesterday. The years they just flew.

I’ve been hooked on those two.

Time has flown, the smooth and the rough

I often wonder if I’ve done enough.

I know that, for my part, it’s been a good life.

I’m hooked on my wife.

+++++

**8**

**Inside a Zen Painting**

Floating on the Li River

More real than a Zen painting

Rounded karst mountains

Shades of green transforming

Shifting shades of green

Clouds and sunlight exchanging values

Fog rising and falling

Mist advancing, retreating

Mountains appearing and disappearing

Splashes of yellow and white and plum

The quiet river

The ancient farms

Ducks, cormorants, and water buffalo

Bamboo thickets and ancient caves

Thick silent sounds of the river

Carl 8Apr 06

+++++

**Lagoon Evening**

Waiting for the lobsters to cook

we watched the sun set

behind the mangrove trees

in a short burst of color.

A silver sliver moon

that trailed the sun by two hours

reflected off the lagoon

framed first by the orange afterglow

then by the black of night.

Two moons,

Pina Coladas

and you.

Memories are painted just so.

+++++

**9**

**Minerals**

On an early spring morning shortly after sunrise

I, a creature of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium

with iron, zinc, magnesium and trace elements,

met a similar human driving a fertilizer spreader

filled with nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium

with iron, zinc, magnesium and trace elements,

adding fertility to his depleted field so that his crops

would be rich in nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium

with iron, zinc, magnesium and trace elements,

to replace those elements which taken up by crops.

A long file of redwing blackbirds was passing overhead

heading north and loaded with tropical nitrogen,

phosphorus and potassium with iron, zinc, magnesium

and, last but not least, trace elements

and excreting them along the way.

Just like magic.

+++++

**10**

**Personal Observations on not Snorkeling for Several Years**

Years ago I would slip on worn Levis,

a sweat shirt, mask, snorkel and tennis shoes

and snorkel for hours.

I could free dive to 35 feet and stay down for a couple minutes.

Today I found that if I could see it

I couldn't reach it

and I could not distinguish what I picked up.

I could not stay down a whole minute.

My ears hurt below ten feet.

My legs told me that an hour of flippering was enough.

I may be getting old

but I prefer to think

I'm just out of practice.

**+++++**

**White Bat**

Plums had set on the old gnarled tree

when a hoary white bat found us,

circled round us

and gave us a thousand years.

The plums have ripened

and time is held in a polished ironwood box

carved with a peach

and bats on the four corners.

The box sits on a table between our chairs.

Take my hand and I will keep you as warm

as our kung and two mau taan

until the owl cries out in the night.

Lah Tse Ca 951226

**11**

**Three-Gallon Churn**

**(A Cheapskates Valentine)**

On Valentine's Day

we were poking through antique shops

holding hands and

making snide comments in a whisper

when I found a priceless

brown Meyer three-gallon churn

(without lid and dasher)

A faint reflection in its dark brown glaze

showed us me as a child

on Saturday morning

sitting on a kitchen chair

with the cool churn between my bare feet

cool cream waiting to become butter.

I stroked the dasher up and down

and listened to Let's Pretend on the radio

hoping the butter would hurry

so I could get a glass of cool fresh buttermilk

and go out and play.

Two hundred dollars!!

Memories are worth a lot

but not for just an old brown pot.

carl 8feb97

+++++

**12**

Misty Morning Jazz

Driving in a blowing rain at dawn

the jazz of Jerry Harris

ushered in the first indication

of the coming dawn.

Sunny Carpenter

backlit dark clouds

with a pearly gray.

Maya’s song revealed

comma-shaped clouds of blowing scud.

Jeremy White’s smooth jazz

defined dark shapes

along the road into

cattle, cactus and mesquite trees,

farmhouses and windmills.

A Dairy Queen opened to

a NeuvoFlamenco piece called Santa Fe.

Kenny Gee turned the sky

pink.

Misty morning Jazz.

carl 980817

**13**

**MAÑANA TEA**

"Cafe, Senior?"

"Hot tea, please."

"Que?"

"Una taza de te caliente, por favor."

"Oh. Si, Senior. Right away."

Hot water arrives but no teabag.

Time passes.

"Mozo, por favor."

"Senior?"

"Traigame una taza de te.?"

"Si. Si. Right away."

The water is like warm when the tea bag arrives.

"Mozo, por favor."

"Senior?'

"Traigame una taza de aqua caliente?"

"Que?"

"I want hot tea, dammit!"

"Oh. Si, Senior. Right away."

He brings me a cold beer with a sly grin.

"Salute. And to Hell with the tea."

**14**

**Momma**

Momma outlived Poppa by thirteen years

in the same old house and same lumpy bed

her pillow often wet with tears

The tears weren’t so much from misery

or that she missed the Old Man that she put up with 47 years

but that he went and died before their Golden Anniversary.

We tried to make it easy for her

new TV, a microwave, new sheets and towels and clothes

and she would always “oo” and “ah” and purr.

She finally got old and tired and died.

Cleaning out the place, we found every item labeled

and gifts rewrapped and even bows neatly tied

and her burial clothes lay out and the funeral fully planned

and fully paid for with burial instructions

placing her on top of the Old Man.

We miss them both on Mother’s and Father’s Days

We leave flowers; stand in the shade of a cemetery oak

Reminisce and never leave in haste.

mother’s day 96

+++++

**15**

**A Stromberg-Carlson Radio**

I just heard a song that took me back to 1943.

This was the summer before I started the first grade.

It was hot and still and only two little brothers

to play with in our two room house in an orange grove

in the Lower Rio Grande Valley with a hand pump

and a one holer.

My father had painted an appliance store

and got a radio got as partial payment,

an ivory Stromberg-Carlson radio.

This particular day my mother turned in on to KRGV

in Harlingen thinking music would help us nap.

"In the Big Rock Candy Mountain

all the cops have wooden legs, ..."

"If the ocean was whusky and I was a duck

I'd dive to the bottom and never come up."

And then they played

"Old Shep is gone where the good doggies go."

and I cried. My mother tried to explain

that it was just a song and that Ole Shep

wasn't even a real dog but I cried.

That song still chokes me up.

+++++

**16**

**THE SIP**

Momma said, "Git yer own glass

you'll git germs and catch yer death."

But she was a grownup

and I wanted to be big

so I snuck a sip

a sweet sip

from her glass

while she wasn't looking.

She was right.

I caught my death from her

but also life

and growing up

and growing wise

and growing old

from just one sip

one sweet sip

+++++

**17**

**Three Ice Cold Beers**

The 1951 sun rolled off the hood in shimmering sheets

that crawled through the vent at 140 degrees.

The three of us were about to melt

July heat had beaten us to our knees.

The two lane concrete highway shivered

and the top of oncoming traffic dripped

the rest of the vehicle onto the road

and the last of our lukewarm water was sipped.

Then the first house on the outskirts of Freer crept by

as civilization reared its beautiful head

and we parked by a restaurant near the town's blinking light

near the railroad station and a packing shed.

A rusty screen door had a painted orange comet

that advertised Rainbo Bread.

We opened the screen door and entered the shade

and for the moment the heat had fled.

The wooden screen door slammed behind us twice

and a cat on the counter raised its head and glared.

We took a table under a grumbling ceiling fan

and asked what the cook had prepared.

The waitress, who must have been all of fourteen,

said, "The chili is good today."

So we ordered a bowl of chili and an ice-cold beer

and listened to the jukebox play.

The chili came with two slices of bread,

half an onion and a pickle spear.

We each got a glass of crushed ice

and a brown bottle of warm Shiner Bock beer.

The chili and beer, the cat and the song -

lunch was over much too soon.

We were back on the hot concrete ribbon

heading east to Corpus towards a half-full moon.

Now all the cars are air conditioned, the road has six lanes

and you can drive three hundred miles on a tank

and the screen door and restaurant are gone

replaced by an interstate bank.

+++++

**18**

**Two Waterford Glasses**

My mother had a pair of Waterford crystal glasses

she kept in a in a teak box lined with blue-velvet

that she kept safely stored in her cedar chest.

On their anniversary she got them out

and she and my father had a sip of sherry.

When I was about eight years old

the little girl next door was over visiting my mother

who was showing Janie the treasures in her cedar chest.

I was hot and I asked for a glass of water.

Janie wanted one also so I asked my mother

if we could use her fancy glasses.

Janie refused to drink out of the Waterford wine glasses

fearing she would get drunk.

Ten years later my parents had a run of bad financial luck

My mother gave me the teak box and the Waterford glasses

when I graduated high school.

I joined the Navy and asked her to hold on to the glasses

and that she and Dad should continue using them

until I returned from scattering my wild oats.

I eventually got married.

We enjoyed these Waterford glasses for special occasions.

Mom and Dad were gone but we had a son of our own.

One afternoon I came home from work

to find my son and a friend had drunk Kool-Aid

from these glasses and had chipped the rim of one.

We told him this was no big thing and put the glasses

into their blue-velvet lined teak box.

Years later it was time to downsize into retirement.

An estate sale was arranged to reduce the clutter.

The estate sale manager asked about the teak box

with the chipped glass hinting that no one would buy this.

I gave the glasses to my son and told him not to spill them.

They were full of memories.

+++++

**19**

**TIME, SHE HAS CHANGED**

It was once that any time my hand

touched her thigh

or caressed her hip

or stroked her breast

that mi Chica would roll over

and satisfy my manly needs.

I am still macho and the need is still there

But time, she has changed.

Mi Chica, now she acts like the gringas

I knew when I played Sancho.

The gringas often said “No”

and would fight like they meant “No”.

Now when I touch mi Chica it is like a spark.

It makes her jump away like my hand was hot.

I am still macho and I still have my needs

but many times I am left like a stallion stud

on a hot summer day

with his macanudo displayed

just cooling himself.

Time and mi Chica, they are changing.

Sancho has gotten old and the gringas,

they say “No” more often .

And they want me to wear a raincoat when I take a shower.

But they don’t understand that I am macho

and must feel my pleasure.

They think I must change like the time.

BUT I AM MACHO.

+++++

**20**

**WELCOME HOME**

I go for a week my fortune to seek

And now I feel I'd like a welcome home.

I get off of the plane in the sunshine or rain

And find I'm in the terminal all alone.

A hundred others disembark like the emptying the Ark

Three hundred wives and children, friends and such

Hugs, kisses and good news welcomes home to chase the blues

Hearty greetings make friends glad they stayed in touch.

His arms around her waist, little girl with happy face.

A cocktail party sound as they all confab.

So I walk down the long hall under a light gray pall

Get my bags and go out to find a cab.

I ride home in a taxi. The driver charges the max he

thinks I'll pay him for the ride. The weather news is free.

That I'm home there is no doubt. The porch light is burned out.

Three newspapers lay in the grass and the neighbor’s dog growls at me.

After a week at war I walk in through the door

And get the welcome home with which I'm hexed.

Dented fender. Bad report card. Stopped up sewer. Dug up yard.

I want to call the boss and find out when I'm leaving next.

Welcome home.

+++++

**21**

**WEST SIDE ONE**

The old man sits on the front steps

of the white shiplap house

off south Alamo St,

the house he grew up in.

He sits and listens

to the summer cicada in the hackberry tree

and the rumble of trucks and busses.

He is comfortable in a plain white T-shirt

and a weeks growth of white beard.

His bad fitting dentures sit in the kitchen.

He and the house are getting old.

++++

**22**

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**Carl Lahser**

**23**

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**24**

**800 Years of Snow**

**JIM Creek WA**

Sitka spruce trees 800 years old,

that take five men to circle each ‘round,

collects the first snow fall on branches

two hundred feet above the ground.

Heavy, wet snow

piled on branches two inches tall

white streaks on dark green

waiting to freeze or fall

+++++

**Seattle Departure, Yesterday**

(fall of ‘76)

An inversion covers the city

Five mountain peaks

float like islands on a sea of white

+++++

**25**

**Anvils**

Like lava spewing through a field of snow

rising currents push moisture upwards

to flatten out like a red hot rivet

hit by a heavy hammer.

Virga shrouds the lower levels

while eddy currents

drip

and tumble

and rise

decorating the anvil tree

with white snowy fruit.

+++++

**SHENNANDOAH VALLEY SPRING**

White skeletons of

leafless trees in plum colors

the budding of spring.

+++++

**Vicksburg**

A blazing orange basketball

a free shot in the heavy stillness

leaping out of the misty piney woods

through kudzu vines

+++++

**26**

**Argentia in the Fog**

15 Aug 61

It's foggy.

An SA-16 Albatross departs

it’s wing tip lights rip

through the gray mist.

Low visibility.

A coiled snake of pulsating approach lights

strikes at the runway threshold.

Pea soup.

White wing tip lights and

the engines roar

are the only signs of a departing P2V.

Thick enough to cut.

Grey apparitions materialize

from the mist

as fuel trucks and mobile power units.

Ducks are hitchhiking.

Our radar Constellation takes off.

Hope the weather breaks

before time to land.

Gulls are grounded.

Alternate fields are:

Keflavic,

Glasgow and

Copenhagen

and their weather ain't too good.

A pod of whales just swam by.

Sure wish I was down there

dry and warm

wishing I were up here flying.

+++++

**27**

**Breaking the Bracketville Drought**

I pulled off highway 90 into a wet parking lot

of the Burger and Shake

on an August Monday morning

joining half a dozen other pickups.

A black cowdog jumped out of a pickup bed

and lifted his leg on my left front tire

then stood looking at me

slowly wagging his soggy tail.

Inside out of the drizzle were a dozen men

in ball caps or straw western hats

all smiles with the morning rain,

the first in months.

This rain could save the remaining

cotton, cattle and goats.

Purple Sage was in bloom.

On Tuesday morning the smiles were gone.

They talked of the 14-inch overnight rain,

cattle stranded on high ground,

goats up in the trees,

sheep floating down flooded draws, and

cotton plants beat flat.

“Wish it would stop raining,” says one.

“Bet you wish you’d have wished for rain

instead of praying for it,” replied another dryly.

They all kinda laughed to keep from crying.

+++++

**28**

**Cloud Desert and Quiet River**

It’s just the average New Mexico desert:

sand the color

of old Army pink dress trousers

but marked by irregular shadows

with shapes of dinosaurs

and rabbits

and pirates

in shades of blue

The sand pimpled with dunes and hills

and sliced by wandering canyons

that sometimes feed the Rio Grande River.

Distant mountains, reddish in the sunset

are capped with pink snow

dropped as Natures own April Fools joke.

Maroon buds and flowering plants

hug the floodplains of the oxbows

creating white water rapids.

Oh, to be rafting this colorful river.

+++++

**29**

**FIRST SNOW OF '94 ANCHORAGE**

Cold drizzle.

Then little balls of slush.

Finally, large, wet snow flakes

that stick to the top of grass

but soon melts.

It will take a little more winter

to cover the world and

form ice around the pond banks

and run the last geese south.

+++++

**Grackles in the Mist**

Two male grackles in the mist

shiny black with golden eyes

sitting on adjacent fence posts

displaying

intimidating each other

until the one on the taller post won

+++++

**Jackdaw Spring**

Those big shiny black birds are back

standing like ebony lawn ornaments

tail down, beak reaching for the sky

stretching so much their feet almost leave the ground

+++++

**30**

**GROUND FOG AT DEL RIO**

Hill tops float darkly

on a sea of white

ground fog

disconnected

from the rest of the earth

Brush and trees

fade into the creeping mist

silhouetted briefly against the glowing fog

Mist turns yellow

back lighted by the sun

behind the rise

Hills materialize piecemeal

turning gray then green

as a glowing white ball

floats upward through translucent vapor

As the ground fog burns off

the earth expands.

The horizon

asserts itself.

Doves launches

on whistling wings

going nowhere

in the mesquite and mist.

A cottontail hunches down

as the sunline strikes

still nibbling a leaf

in the cool ,damp dawn

Time for mending fences.

+++++

**31**

**MOUNTAINS SINKING FROM SIGHT**

Mt. Adams.

Mt. St. Helens.

Mt. Reinier.

Majestic masses of kingly height

cloaked in a mantle of fresh new white

sinking, oh so slowly, from sight

as we approach Seattle

+++++

**MISSISSIPPI RIVER IN THE SNOW**

The cold November rain

and sullen skies are left behind

at Washington National Airport. We climb

through the clouds of gray to find

bright sun and blue skies

more settling to the mind.

West we flew above the overcast

until we passed the front

and the ground appeared at last.

Tennessee and Arkansas covered with snow.

Roads, fence lines, ponds and forest show

blue-black against the fields of white

and the sinuous Mississippi River,

drained of its might,

cold and blue-black, silent, waiting

for the snow to melt

and renew its power

creating a flood tide,

a tan mixture of water and topsoil

with chemical pollutants

complicating the site of the farmer’s toil.

+++++

**32**

**Two Maple Leaves**

Oak and sycamore leaves,

dry and brown,

blown into windrows

against a stone wall,

they crunch at each step

Two Silver Maple leaves,

one scarlet, one yellow with green veins,

rest on this rustling bed of death

waiting to desiccate

and turn brown

+++++

**A Seattle Maple Leaf in November**

Three lobes with bright yellow veins

the green becoming brownish

with an overlay of a red and orange wash

lying on the wet sidewalk.

+++++

# 33

# Rain in Three Parts

**I**

From gray, amorphous clouds

falls rain looking like a horses tail

flipping slowly in the wind.

Sometimes the rain

blows away or evaporates

before it hits the ground as virga

**2**

Look ahead.

In the distance the horizon

becomes blurred then

disappears into a cloud

as rain cells drop their load

heavy rain within the lighter showers

**3**

After the rain

standing water reflects sunlight

like a broken string of mirrored beads

ponds and cattle trails red beneath the silver

liquid silver strands in the rows of a new field

Water to make the summer green.

+++++

**34**

**West Texas Drought**

An almost empty lake sits baking in the sun.

Fifty square miles of former lake bottom

covered with silt the color of snow

noxious weeds slowly taking over

replacing native vegetation.

A giant dust devil redistributes some of the silt.

Carl970323

+++++

**PEREGRINE FALCON**

**IN A CANYON OF GLASS**

Look down Marquette Street in Minneapolis

and up at building of steel

and mirrored blue and green glass

It looks surrealistic,

a cold canyon of blue sky and ice.

A pair of Peregrine Falcons appear.

One stoops

and takes an unwary pigeon

the scene reflected in cold green glass.

The tough survive even in a canyon of glass.

+++++

**35**

**SHADOWS ON SNOW**

Snow, deep on the windward slope,

shadowed in the afternoon sun.

Shadows of steep ridges

reflecting the snowy crest.

Shadows of conifers

forming open angles with the trees.

Shadows of clouds

dropping new snow.

Shadows of drifts and hay stacks

and cattle in snowy pastures.

A sinuous creek blue-black

against the snow

reflecting a flash of sun.

Roads and power lines white and straight

through the forest.

Doubts casting shadows on faith.

Opinions shadow facts.

Points of view.

carl 940313

+++++

**36**

**WINNIPEG RIVER: SOLSTICE SUNRISE**

On the Winnipeg River light is at four AM.

The horizon is broken with trees.

The sun rose at Oh Five Ten

ushered in by a swift, cool breeze.

Half the river was a mirror

that reflected the rising sun.

The other half was covered with ripples,

the breeze was having fun.

Herring gulls called and the breeze disappeared.

The sky turned pink then yellow then blue.

The longest day of the year had dawned.

Half the solar year was through.

++++

THE WALK

About mid-afternoon on a fine fall day,

cloudy and humid after a quick shower,

our footfalls are muffled by damp leaves.

A Bluejay screams in the distance.

Acorn fall shattering the heavy stillness.

We walk not speaking

holding hands if the path is wide enough

to walk side by side

to a log on the edge of a clearing.

We sit and watch a pair of Cardinals flit

through bare branches.

Holding hands,

memorizing worn knuckles

and scarred fingers

warts and bluish veins

until we silently agreed

it was time to return

along the silent path

through the half-light holding hands.

+++++

**37**

ECOVIEW

No.1

Alaska to Florida

Not your usual neighborhood

art show!!

Carl Lahser

**38**

**Ecoview** **No. 1** is the first of a series of poetographic portraits. They are sensitive, mater-of-fact, and possibly controversial verbal pictures of man and several cities and their interactions with nature. Wet leaves. Wild flowers. Oxbow lakes. Back roads. Urban renewal. Neither for nor against anything in particular, these are observations, just the way I see things. Feel free to disagree. Even I change my mind on rereading some of these insights.

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**39**

**Anchorage, Alaska**

#### Arctic Noon

I stepped out for lunch

into the late September Anchorage sun

and found my shadow

3 o'clock long

but pointing northward

+++++

**Downtown Geese**

Downtown Anchorage projects upwards

with a dozen tall buildings.

Geese, forming up to fly south,

navigate through

and around

these obstacles

at the ten-story level

in long, honking Vees.

They circle

and turn southward

in the late September sun.

+++++

**40**

**Giant Shadows**

An architecturally lighted

white brick facade

of a twelve story parking garage

in downtown Anchorage

provides a large white screen

at night.

A fluttering shadow is projected-

US and Alaska flags

on a four story pole.

A pigeon, sleeping on the rooftop,

awakened from its sleep

flew upward through the light.

Circling, it cast a giant shadow

on this canvas

before settling down,

cooing.

+++++

**41**

**Atlanta, GA**

**Atlanta Trilogy -1992**

**1 Peachtree St., Atlanta.**

Downtown,

quivering like a horny teenage male

wanting to become a man

but not knowing how

indiscriminately ejaculating wealth

on one block like

Brooks Brothers and Macys

and the Omni Hotel

yet knowing the frustration of blight

on the next block where

Tokyo Shapiro's Quick Chinese Food

is closed for an eternal lunch break

and the One-Hour Valet Cleaners

will now take forever.

The city grows fast and matures slowly.

+++++

**42**

**2 My Hotel**

It is one AM.

A room for the night in this hotel

costs more than a day’s wage.

At that it's cheap for Atlanta.

I can hear every door close

and every toilet flush.

It's all better when I hear

a mockingbird

somewhere nearby

singing its heart out

under halogen security lights

and a small sliver of silver moon.

+++++

**3 AFRICAN ARTS**

Black Pride.

A boutique in the hotel district

that sells African art

to black Americans.

The art is new

from Nigeria and Tanzania.

New art.

Not antiques

but at antique prices.

High prices.

This art depreciates

when it leaves the shelf.

Should a brother do this to a brother?

+++++

**43**

**Charlotte, NC**

**1**

Charlotte could be a smaller twin of many small cities

and some big ones, too.

Urban renewal gutted downtown,

ran the retailers off to the malls,

displaced the inner-city homeowners

and demolished old neighborhoods.

The city, on most of the downtown

urban renewal land,

encouraged hotel complexes

and high rise office buildings

then wondered where the people went.

**2**

Urban renewal projects were completed.

New brick streets and sidewalks.

New benches and bus shelters.

New trees planted along the sidewalks.

New raised flower beds (city maintained).

New grass and trees in the medians.

Where are the citizens, the people

for whom this was done?

(There must be an echo in here somewhere!)

**3**

Yuppies from the 'burbs

occupy the corporate desks by day

but downtown is deserted

after the quitting time.

Commuters hurry home to the ‘burbs.

Restaurants and shops close.

Nothing moves downtown

after working hours.

**44**

**4**

But Charlotte had an idea.

The library was renovated, enlarged.

Spirit Square was completed with

five art galleries,

three small theatres,

and workshops for dance and crafts.

Discovery Place has a zoo,

a rain forest and aquarium,

the museum of science and natural history,a planetarium,

and an Imax theatre.

Children are bussed downtown

to see these wonders and

to begin getting the next generation

back to downtown.

**5**

The Charlotte power brokers want

a professional football franchise

but the PEOPLE prefer

to watch college football.

They WILL learn to like pro ball.

**6**

Most cities have no plan

other than that which power brokers

tell the ignorant mass of voters

is good for them.

The few rich and powerful get more so

while small businesses

and the taxpayer suffer.

**7**

People don't live in cities

People live in communities.

With farsighted and unselfish planning

any city could become a community

but don't hold your breath.

+++++

**45**

**INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA**

**INDIANA RELIC FORESTS**

Flying over Indiana in the Fall

I see relic forests that once covered all.

These forest, thin and serpentine,

follow streams.

Forests not at all like those found

by resourceful Indians

or by hardy European settlers seen.

The great trees were taken from the Indian

and laid to earth

to free the land for village

and farm

and hearth.

A relic forest now yellow and red,

still harbors endangered plants

and sheltered copses where

wildlife young are fed.

Our new, dynamic instrument

replacing an ecosystem

that was, itself, a postglacial immigrant.

+++++

**46**

**Tennessee**

**SMOKY MOUNTAIN BACK ROADS**

Narrow two lane roads with no shoulders

Rippling streams with pools and boulders

Pine trees with kudzu

crows and chickadees

fallen logs with moss

and solitary carpenter bees

Highways disappear

into fog on many days,

mountain ranges silhouetted

in a smoky haze

Oak Ridge labs

nestled in the wooded hills

placed Plutonium 'neath the mud

of cool, clear mountain rills

Endangered species

- birds and clams -

contend with open pit coal mines

and TVA multipurpose dams.

Land of progress

and contrast -

modern technology

a Rebel past.

+++++

**47**

**TENNESSEE FARMS**

**New Fields**

Fields of sandy loam

wrested from the forest

mottled and streaked tan and brown

where the flooding Mississippi

deposited Minnesota silt and sand

+++++

**Old fields**

Mottled tan sandy fields

where curving terraces

mark constant elevation

retard soil erosion

and retain life-giving water

Green strips of windbreaks planted

to slow the cold, wet winter wind

provide wildlife habitat and food

Soil Conservation Service

specials from the 1930's

+++++

**Abandoned Farmstead**

Small, square clapboard house

with a rusted tin roof

sitting in a field of green

surrounded by FHA trees

no trace on man's recent use

anywhere near the abandoned house.

+++++

**Old Homestead**

A house just so

with trees just so

and outbuildings just so

mark Farm and Home Administration houses financed just so.

+++++

**48**

**Memphis, Tennessee**

**MEMPHIS OXYMORON**

Orderly rows of warehouses,

parked tractor trailers,

apartment complexes,

subdivision cull-de-sacs,

docks and barge strings

Try to fit on an irregular flood plain

along the sweeping bends

of the Mississippi River.

Square pegs in round holes

+++++

**MEMPHIS MARSHALLING SLOUGH**

A marshalling tug pushes

barges into a mile long train

and stirs up sediment until the slough

is tan as the dry flood plain.

+++++

**COWS CAST LONG SHADOWS TOO**

Flying into Memphis in the early morning

trees cast long shadows.

So do the power poles and water tanks.

The shadow of the plane

falls darkly on the low white clouds.

A lone milk cow standing in a meadow

patiently grazing casts a long shadow too.

+++++

49

**Mississippi River**

**DEPOSITS IN THE BANK OF THE MISSISSIPPI**

Sand deposits two feet deep

cover fields and smothers trees.

The sand stops grass and crops

and will cost a bundle

to remove or plow under.

These bottomland fields

got top soil and silt gifts

all tan and white

from careless Minnesota farmers

Trees in the bottoms are dead

from a six month immersion

that cut off oxygen

and killed the roots

They are just waiting to lie down.

Light tan patterns in reddish fields

mark the low spots where water stood

concentrating seed banks in these swales

+++++

**50**

**RIVER IN THE SNOW**

Cold November rain and sullen skies

are left behind in Washington DC.

We climb through the clouds of gray to find

bright sun and blue skies

more settling to the mind.

West we flew above the overcast

until we passed the front.

The ground appeared at last.

Tennessee and Arkansas

covered with snow

Roads, fence lines, ponds

and shadowy trees are all that show.

Blue-black against the fields of white

the sinuous Mississippi River

drained of its might

cold and blue-black, silent

waiting for the snow to melt

to renew its power creating a flood tide

a tan mixture of water and topsoil

and pollutants

depleting yet cleansing

the site for the farmers toil

+++++

**51**

**SOUTHERN AUTUMN SEXTET**

**1. SHREVEPORT, LOUISIANA**

Six forest fires

pumping white wood smoke

into a white, polluted sky.

White, wet wood smoke

spread in a horizontal layer

under an inversion lie.

**2. RED RIVER VALLEY**

Visible for a hundred miles

pink sand fields in the floodplain

encroaching on slash pine forests

Farm and forest, both for man's gain?

**3. MISSISSIPPI FLOODPLAIN**

Busier than a wedding ring quilt

the oxbows and meanders

have painted the land

from a pastel palette of sand and silt.

from a pastel palette of sand and silt.

4**. GREEN OXBOWS**

Oxbow lakes of fluorescent green

fed by fertilizer from surrounding fields.

Killing miles of eutrophic streams

by increasing agricultural yields.

**52**

**5. MISSISSIPPI RICE FARMS**

Acres of rectangular paddies

reflecting many shades of green and blue

The tan ones have been harvested

and the dried rice already sent to you.

**6. CYPRESS SWAMPS IN FALL**

Shallow backwaters

with dark cypress trees

surrounded by rafts of green watermeal

up to their knobby knees.

+++++

**53**

**Florida**

**The Florida Panhandle**

**NAGA-UTA BEACH**

Sand warmed by the sun

squawks and squeeks under bare feet

like fresh moonlit snow

Sand bugs run with waves

fleeing to the ebbing sea

like ducks heading south.

Evening clouds gather

to cushion the sinking sun

large and red at dusk.

Three pelicans fly

across the flaming red disc.

The day ends in peace.

+++++

**54**

**TYNDALL BEACH IN SEPTEMBER:**

**SCENES for a NATURALIST**

**Setting:** Predawn through the day and into the night, 24 hours the beach at Tyndall Air Force Base. This beach is located east of Panama City, Florida, on the Gulf of Mexico.

**Time:** September

**55**

**SCENE 1: Breaking Day**

Ghostly birds sit quietly or

run on the beach flirting with the waves

waiting for the sun to rise.

The ghost birds fly as I approach.

leaving no tracks.

At extreme low tide

the beach has a step down

into the moat

where the water depth increases

to several feet.

Schools of juvenile fish,

blue crabs and

occasional stingrays

cruise the step

feeding on the largess

from the incoming sea and retreating waves.

A stingray flies silently

on rippling wings along the stepstops,

and, with a flip of its fringing fins,

disappears into the sand.

Only its eyes and gill slits

remain in sight

A small cloud of sand and crushed shells

is expelled from its gill slits

and the hunt for clams continues.

A lone Terebellid bristleworm,

(genus Thelepsus),

pulled from its tube in the sand

by a small sandpiper,

lies twisting and gyrating

trying to orient itself

no longer in the confining but

nondimensional sand matrix

like a swimmer in an undertow.

**56**

**SCENE 2: Mid Day**

A wave retreats

And a herd of small shapes scurry

in random patterns

beating the retreating wave

back to the ocean they disappear

diving into and swimming through the fluid wet sand

Emerita (Hippa) talpoida, the sand bug

their molted exoskeletons litter the beach.

In a mass of eel-grass

stranded on the beach by a retreating wave

lie several empty skate egg cases

their purpose achieved

this kin of the stingray lays its eggs

in black, leathery protective pouches

The Devil's Coin Purse, five inches long

with a horn on each corner.

A hundred species of shells

decorate the beach

most are broken not by storms

but crunched by octopus

or fish like the Drum

many are pierced by small round holes

of the predatory Urosalpinx cinerea

feeding on their cousins

others are pulled open and devoured

by the starfish, Echinaster sentus

A three by five inch sea slug

a nudibranch of the family Dorididae

lies stranded above the last wave

its translucent oval body

cream and lemon yellow

half buried in the sand

Placed back in the sea

it swims away slowly

**57**

**SCENE 3. Towards Evening**

White sand dollars are dead

Whole or in pieces sand dollars

lie on the beach among the shells

Live sand dollars live in the surf

just below the low tide line

brown-green circles decorating the sand

small, thin and rounded Dendraster

larger, fatter Echinarachnius parma

Both charm the beachcomber

Warm afternoon sand squawks

under bare feet

like footsteps in fresh snow

in the moonlight.

I never tried bare feet in the snow

The afternoon cumulus clouds

gather on the horizon

as if to cushion

the red sinking sun

Three pelicans in formation

fly across

the inflated red ball

and crash into the sea

**58**

**4. Night**

**Board walk**

From the lighted parking lot

past the bath house

where a dozen tree frogs seek mates

to the boardwalk

where the hum of mosquitoes

is muted by passionate calls

of five kinds of frogs and toads

playing a symphony

as my hollow thunking footsteps

take me to the moon lit beach

**59**

**Beach and Surf**

A full moon approaches its zenith

lighting the beach

the sand glows a milky white

wet broken shells sparkle

in the moonlight

A coyote hunting crabs, spooked,

runs off into the dunes

An ebbing tide is near its lowest point

quiet ghostly waves slosh on the sand

waves pursue and attract

feeding Plovers and Sandpipers

dark running shapes running

up and down the hard packed beach

A Blue Crab, Callinectes sapidus,

scuttles sideways

into a retreating wave,

retreating from my muffled footfalls

Ghost crabs of the genus Ocypoda

With eye stalks raised, they hesitate then

run on tip-toes in the moon light

to their burrows in the sand

Bites of Salt Marsh Mosquitoes

their hum almost drowning the returning surf

finally drive me

from the early morning beach

**60**

**SCENE 5: Hurricane Opal**

**1. The Storm**

The boardwalk leads to the beach

as cold gray clouds sit on the horizon

The strangely lit sea is uncommonly flat

with the impression of being oily

Cumulus clouds build

sundogs and itinerant showers

walk across the bays

and down the beaches

The wind rises and the surf builds

huge swells run over the barrier islands

and break on the beach with a rumble

and an explosion of flying spume

The waves press higher on the beach

until they lap at the base of the dunes

rising wind howls and blows the surf higher

large drops of stinging rain fly horizontally

the stinging drops cutting into the dunes

The storm surge carries the sea

and its flotsam over the dunes

into spartina marches

and pine forest a mile inland

The wind falls off and the surf declines

as the eye of the hurricane

passes fifty miles to the west

The boardwalk has gone with the wind

**61**

**2. Aftermath**

The wind dies

its roar fading to a moan.

Clouds and rain slacken and

sundogs again walk the ocean

Pine, oaks and seaoats die in the salt water

or are burned on the windward side

desiccated by the salty spray

or hundred mile winds

The beach is rearranged

Dunes are gone

replaced by five-foot piles of relic sand

several deep cuts almost succeeded

in punching through to St Andrews Bay

Headwalls, docks and other beach structures

are gone or non-functional

but the observation tower remains

A 24-foot sailboat lies stranded on the beach

far from the water

Gulls have a field day harvesting

hurricane casualties

+++++

**62**

63

# ECOVIEW

No.2

Texas

Not your usual neighborhood

art show!!

Carl Lahser

**64**

**Ecoview** **No. 2** is the second of a series of personal poetographic portraits. I consider them to be a sensitive, mater-of-fact, and possibly controversial collection of verbal pictures of Texas over the past 50 years of people, situations and interactions with nature. Ground fog. Wild flowers. Air pollution. Back roads. Neither for nor against anything in particular, these are observations from my point of view. Feel free to disagree. Even I sometimes change my mind rereading some of these insights.

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**65**

**Texas**

Texas has a lot of space, a lot of potential for sights and sounds, and some strange characters. Here is a peek at a few.

**CATFISH HARRY**

Back when I was 5 or 6,

just a little towheaded lad,

I tagged along to visit a fisherman,

an old friend of my dad.

He lived on a houseboat

on a backwater slough

and catfishing was his fame.

A noodler, he caught the big ones by hand.

Catfish Harry was his name.

He also ran trotlines

with stink bait of sun dried clams.

He knew every creek for miles around

and every irrigation dam.

His houseboat stunk

and was covered with flies

(you could smell it a mile up wind).

He traded his fish for food and beer

and other odds and ends.

We sat outside and talked for a while

then he asked if we'd like something to drink.

I took a soda and my dad took a cup

of coffee that looked like ink.

**66**

Harry said his coffee was special,

"Sock coffee", was the name he used.

"Ya put a hand full of grounds in a sock

and a glug or two of booze."

Then you add an egg or two

and a pinch of salt

and some water into the pot.

Then, you boil it 'til its done

and what do you have?

Good coffee, boiled eggs and clean socks."

We laughed at the thought of sock coffee.

Dad said, "You better change

your brand of beers.

Just what the Hell

would you do with clean socks?

You haven't worn shoes in years."

A little more talk and we picked out a big fish

then shook hands and said our goodbyes

and drove back up the road leaving Harry

with his houseboat, sock coffee and flies.

+++++

**67**

**Thanksgiving Morning**

It was Thanksgiving morning and

we were headed for her mothers' for dinner.

We would go to my parents for Christmas.

My old Mercedes was running well

as we flew down a two lane East Texas road

through the red sand and pines headed for Tyler.

Half a mile ahead a 1950 Chevy

covered with red dust pulled on the highway.

I slowed a little and signaled to pass.

I was about fifty feet off his left rear fender

when he moved into my lane and cut me off.

He did this several times poking along at 40 mph

so I slowed down and followed him.

Several other vehicles tried to pass.

They were also cut off and pulled in front of me

until I was number eight in line.

Then a young woman with several kids tried to pass

and the Chevy ran her off into the ditch.

**68**

A pickup with three young men

who had been tossing out occasional beer cans

stopped to check on the car in the ditch.

She was OK so the pickup shot past the line of cars.

The Chevy tried to cut him off but

the pickup rammed the Chevy and forced it off the road.

Most of the other cars stopped.

People were piling out

with several guns, clubs and a rope

running for the Chevy.

I drove on by and never saw the driver.

+++++

**69**

**Port Isabel**

In the summer of 1946 gas rationing stopped.

My father took a job painting a beach house

near Point Isabel on the South Texas coast.

It was my eighth summer and I went along.

We slept on Army surplus folding cots.

I helped some and played in the sand dunes.

My father never shopped for groceries so

we had bought dry cereal but forgot the milk.

Ice water and lots of sugar on Wheaties.

Lunch and supper were taken

at a bar just down the road.

Hamburgers, fries and a Coke

A jukebox that played the same song

over and over and over.

"If I sent a rose to you

for every time you made me blue

You' have a room full of roses."

I memorized the song and every time

I hear it I remember my father

and summer and Port Isabel.

+++++

**70**

**DESERT SHENRU**

Desert beauty comes

in many forms - sights, sounds, smells

textures, temperatures.

Some are commonplace, some rare-

pastel colors, quiet, sudden death.

A new white pickup

licked to bare metal by cows.

The oak does not care.

Mesquite thorns in thick, rubber tires.

Cattleguards rattle breaks the silence.

Cactus, ocotillo.

Creosotebush of ancient age

in circular clumps.

Yucca, rock, locoweed.

Mountains in a distant haze.

Hot sun, high thin clouds.

Gnat-sized vultures circling.

Heat waves shimmering.

Mirage lake water and trees

Beckon to a nether world.

Thirst and heat abound

But seek not this phantom lake.

Go by night with care.

Avoid the sun and heat.

Water is a precious gem.

Desert night is cold.

Seek shade but beware the night .

Nocturnal creatures,

Tarantula, gecko, coyote,

scorpion, night hawk, cactus moth.

**71**

Cold, clear air, moon, stars,

Phantom glow, shadows that move.

Early morning fog

hides rock and bush like ghosts

and hide the browsing deer.

Desert beauty comes

in many forms - sights, sounds, smells

textures, temperatures.

Some are commonplace, some rare-

pastel colors, quiet, sudden death.

+++++

**Fossil Mind**

In the midst of a Cretaceous fossil bed,

A hillside of marine animals

70 million years dead.

A submerged reef of oysters turned to stone

now lies exposed to the western sun.

Time has flown

and the sea has gone. The shells remain,

mute evidence that nothing is permanent

but change.

+++++

**72**

**Maybe its not too late**

A golden orange moon in a violet sky

A pearl-white sun glowing

in a dark brown haze

A few concerned people know the reason why

and are afraid that man

has numbered his days.

Stack gas plumes green, yellow and brown

Water that burns and can't support fish

Point this out and industry frowns.

They're not responsible for filling mans wish.

Those aware of our numbered days

are pushing hard to get our attention.

Big business resists

but a bite in their profits

causes lots of contention.

+++++

**73**

**Desert Twilight**

The sun sets.

The orange sky turns red.

The red to the black of no color.

Night merges the dark and cool

as twilight meets the eastern darkness.

Moon shadows of the full moon

black over pale monochrome

hides the night creatures

and turns skittering leaves to mini-monsters

and small stones to boulders or chasms.

A Killdeer, near invisible in the moon shadows

erupts running

and then flying

with a familiar but startling

Kildee, Kildee.

Nighthawks glide out of the dark

on silent wings

feeding on insects of the evening.

I walk slowly through the evening

an alien in this evening world.

+++++

**74**

**Summer Madness Is Finally Here**

It looks like a long, hot summer already.

The temperature has started to climb.

Militants have started to riot.

The destitute are turning to crime.

Its too hot to sleep or work

And they'd kill you for only a dime

If it wasn't so damned hot.

Maybe some other time.

The weather is dry.

The sidewalks fry.

Lawns and trees cry.

Cold weather's a lie.

I want ice cream pie.

I've run out of rhymes and patience so

Ihopetheycanfixmydamdedairconditioner NOW!!

Thank heaven for ice water

and mesquite tree shade

while I wait for the bad news.

$300!!!

It better be one Hell hot summer

or I'm gonna be mad.

+++++

**75**

**Airport Jewels**

An airport ramp, halogen lit,

with aircraft,

fuel trucks,

and baggage carts

all part of a warm tangerine glow.

A glow that gives way

to blackness of the airfield.

The airfield lights come on -

sapphire blue braids of taxiway lights;

white diamond runway boundary lights;

an orange string of carnelian lights

down the runway center line;

ruby lights marking the touchdown threshold;

emeralds marking intersections -

a collection of jewels displayed

on the black velvet drape of night.

+++++

**76**

**LIGHTNING BUGS AND WOODPECKERS**

A Boy Scout campout in 1945

We Boy Scouts were camped in the brush

along the Rio Grande River.

Tents were up and a fire had been started

for hot dogs and ghost story shivers.

The hot dogs and canned pork and beans

only took the edge off our appetites

but the ghost stories really worked.

All night the flashlights flickered like fireflies

as our brave Scouts hunted more fire wood.

They were joined by the woodpecker sounds

of Boy Scout hatchets.

Ghost stories, fireflies and

woodpeckers all night long.

When the sun finally rose

we Scouts didn't want to.

+++++

**77**

**Intercoastal Canal**

The intercoastal canal

breaks from the sea in Louisiana

and avoids the Gulf of Mexico through Texas

like a two year old mad at its mother.

Tugs push and pull barges,

many with a hazardous cargo, along the canal

like trypanosomes in a malaria patient.

The canal has caused change:

fresh water swamps are brackish;

brackish bays are saltwater.

Wakes cause soil erosion.

Propellers keep the water turbid.

Dredging causes both deep channels

and spoil banks and mud piles.

Ecosystems haave been destroyed;

nursery beds for shrimp and fish eliminated;

biodiversity changed.

It separates coastal marsh land

from rice fields and pastures.

An occasional bridge lets man

maintain communication with the sea.

We could never build this canal now.

+++++

**78**

**THE LAND OF DISGRACE**

The sun is warm on my hands and my face,

a rare pleasant spot in my land of disgrace.

All that I own is on my back

or in my rucksack or stuffed in my pack.

I saw too much and had my fill of warring

but peace to the public is just plain boring.

These days you can't stay in the military.

War was bad but not this scary.

I lay on the concrete and doze in the sun

Under an overpass on Interstate None.

The sun is warm like whole wheat toast

and I dream of a life on a tropical coast.

I'm hungry and alone but I'm not up tight.

I'll eat tomorrow if I don't freeze tonight.

It's been a long time since I've seen a soft bed.

Next time I'm not wanting I may well be dead.

Too many people like me in this place,

in this land of the homeless,

this land of disgrace.

+++++

**It Must be Winter**

I lay in a hospital bed looking out at the night sky.

No nighthawks or bats chasing supper

And casting shadows in the security lights.

It must be winter.

+++++

**79**

**AUTUMN MOONLIGHT**

Hills and valleys

in the ivory autumn moonlight

An owl call

beckons wandering souls

Hills to ponder

in a cool breeze

A valley of ethereal shade

invites exploration

Inviting scents

abide in the autumn air

Cast caution to the wind

and claim the wonders of the night

+++++

**80**

**Four for San Antonio**

**1. THE ALAMO REMEMBERED**

Fifty years ago the Alamo I remember

was cool and dark

and had a smell of dust

like an archeological dig

and a feel like a shrine to

SOMETHING IMPORTANT.

Today the Alamo was just another museum

with conditioned air

spot lighting

brass plaques

visitors center and guides

It does not feel like a remembering place

but only another historical display

where you can stand on the marker

of that very spot

where someone thinks

an important event occurred.

A museum not quite completed but

not a place of remembering.

A place where the tourist gotta go.

+++++

**81**

**2. THE MENGER BAR**

The bar in the Menger Hotel

is small and dark - intimate.

It's certainly not the bar of a hundred years ago

where Colonels Teddy Roosevelt and Leonard Wood

organized the "Rough Riders"

that fought in Cuba

in the Spanish-American War.

What would they think of the yogurt parlor next door.

But maybe that is what they fought for -

Free Enterprise!

+++++

**3. WEST SIDE ONE**

The old man sits on the front steps

of the white shiplap house on south Alamo St,

the house he grew up in.

He sits and listens to the summer cicada in the hackberry tree

and the rumble of trucks and busses.

He is comfortable in a plain white T-shirt

and a weeks growth of white beard.

His bad fitting dentures sit in the kitchen.

He and the house are getting old.

++++

**82**

**4. NIGHT SKIES**

There were night skies,

black with twinkling stars

and meteors on cool evenings.

Full moon nights with a bluish sky

where scattered thin clouds

below the moon looked dark and

those above the moon

glowed luminous cream colored wisps.

Fifty years ago the night sky

of San Antonio was like that.

The city has grown and

the night sky has changed.

Thirty years ago the black sky

and the stars disappeared.

The night sky turned to a white glow

from the reflected blue

of mercury vapor lights.

Now the sky is orange and pink.

Halogen lights that protect our parking lots

and lead our freeway traffic

through smoggy haze of exhaust fumes

reflect from the overcast.

Darkness and stars overhead

have become rare and precious

**83**

**I had a Rose for you but**

Hi, Mom and Dad. I know its been a while.

I had a rose for you

but I just came from a funeral.

He was no one I particularly cared about.

I don't even know his name

and I'm sure I never saw him before.

I was coming here with a rose for your marker

when I saw a woman dressed in black

and a priest saying words

over a simple casket with no flowers.

So I walked over and stood beside the coffin.

Without looking she said, "He was a good boy".

I agreed.

"The drugs killed him."

"That is sad", I consoled.

"The Army taught him about drugs",

and she started to weep.

The priest had finished his words

and put his arm around her shoulders.

She wept softly.

"He must have loved his country," I replied.

The priest put out his hand,

"Bless you, my son."

"I didn't know him", I said.

The priest looked curious.

I turned and put your rose

on the casket in the open grave.

"No mother of a brother in war

should bury her son alone," I explained.

Now your rose in interred for eternity.

I'll bring you another next week.

+++++

**84**

**85**

ECOVIEW

No.3

D. C.

Not your usual neighborhood

art show!!

Carl Lahser

**86**

**Ecoview** **No. 3** is the third of a series of poetographic portraits. It contains sensitive, mater-of-fact, and possibly controversial collection of verbal pictures of the Washington D.C. area and interactions with nature. Snow. Wild flowers. The homeless. Monuments. No politics or political associations. Neither for nor against anything in particular, these are observations, just the way I see things. Feel free to disagree. Even I sometimes change my mind rereading some of these insights.

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**87**

**Washington D.C.**

The District of Columbia, Bethesda, Arlington. Summer and winter. Politicians and the homeless. High-rises and park benches. A myriad of sights and sounds for the observant. Here is a non-tourist peek at a few.

**Bethesda Spring**

**Caw!**

The call pierces the cold mist.

**Caw!**

A black shadow glides past

denuded oak and beech trees.

**Caw!**

A black omen circles and lands.

Ensconced, it surveys the gray mist

from a high, bare branch.

**Caw! Caw!**

The trees are ready to burst forth

in leaf and flower

the first warm day.

**Caw! Spring! Caw! Caw!**

+++++

**88**

**CROWS ON WHITEFLINT HILL**

It’s a cold, sinking sunset

as the crows come home

to the oaks and beech

on Whiteflint Hill.

The sky is dark with crows.

The trees are breaking with crows.

A cacophony of ten thousand crows

declaims like wives

coming home from work.

Home they come from a long day

down in the dump

feeding at the local landfill.

They settle in as darkness falls

and the street lights sputter and glow.

With occasional forays into the dark sky

when sleep is disturbed

they restlessly wait

for the faint glow of dawn

to leave this sylvan rookery

and return to the land fill.

+++++

**89**

**View from a Washington High-rise**

A remarkable contrast is visible

from this Alexandria high-rise office.

Northwest is

the Washington Monument and

the Capitol building

lighted in the early morning mist,

symbols of personal freedom.

To the south

a freeway is backed up

over the hill and out of sight

barely moving,

a seething parking lot.

Everyone's freedom

impinging

on everyone's freedom.

+++++

**90**

**Old Town, Alexandria , VA**

Historically correct weather

with high humidity and pollen enveloped us

that September evening,

as we trod the brick sidewalk up King Street

Old red brick and painted wooden structures

house new ventures -

restaurants,

frozen yogurt parlors,

T-shirt shops,

an art gallery selling reproductions

of Yi-hsing tea pots.

Hundreds of people sit eating the night away

or promenade in groups

as they have for 400 years.

The 16th century founders,

slavers, seamen, and sellers of their souls

would be proud

of the buildings continued use

of their legacy to turn a profit,

their only regret being

that they did not live to see it.

+++++

**91**

**FOREST GLEN IN FALL**

Decay clothes the wood and stone facade

of the old Forest Glen Girls School

in early November.

A pair of once gilded lions

guard steps leading down

from a fountain with flying chargers,

downwards to a blue windmill-shaped house.

Gilding tarnished the lions

waiting in the cool autumn shade,

awaiting another winter's snow and cold.

Two dozen green species

soaking up the warm noon-time sun

under a clear, brilliant blue sky wait.

They wait for crisp red dogwood leaves,

golden duck-footed tulip poplar leaves,

red and green mottled sugar maple leaves,

large rust red white oak leaves

to fall,

to brown,

to cover the tender greenery,

to protect it from the coming cold,

loving it through the winter

and supporting it into the cool, wet spring.

Several lavender Lamium buds,

a single dandelion

and three yellow strawberry flowers

could not wait

and bloomed today to celebrate the sun.

+++++

**92**

**Maple Leaf in November**

Three lobes with bright yellow veins,

the green becoming brownish

with an overlay of a red and orange wash

lying on the wet sidewalk.

+++++

**Windsock at the**

**Bethesda Hospital Helopad**

It hung straight down

barely moved by stray breezes

displayed against a backdrop

of willow oak trees

with orange-brown leaves

on a clear, cool October afternoon

+++++

**Columbus Circle at 4 AM in July**

Its sticky and cool.

Every bench sleeps at least

one homeless body.

Almost no traffic

but the signals work religiously.

+++++

**93**

**DC Metro**

Descend 300 feet down an escalator

into a large concrete cavern.

Between two mouth-like, dark tunnels

stretch track like a strand of spaghetti

being sucked between two lovers.

Thousands of people

but few interact.

They are probably not enemies

but certainly not friends.

Lights in the platform deck begin to flash

announcing the arrival of a train.

Headlights pierce mist in the tunnel.

Train doors flash open

discharging a crowd of strangers.

Their counterparts board

to begin a rapid underground trip

to somewhere.

+++++

**Downtown Lightning Bug**

A lightning bug winking

its cool green light

flew down the sidewalk

in Bethesda, Maryland,

and landed

on the hand of an entomologist.

Lightning bugs and entomologist

are rare in the city.

+++++

**94**

**A Wooded Wetland**

A meandering creek divides

a sunlit, grassy meadow

and disappears

into a cool, moist woods.

The creek, with its Vaccinium, grape

and poison ivy vines,

is a sharp contrast

to the meadows' grass

speckled with yellow clover and ranunculus flowers.

The woods presents a sudden change.

A curtain of greenbriar, Solomon's Seal and muscadine grape vines

try to hide Tulip Poplar, Holly, Sassafras and Willow Oak.

The damp shade causes

thin, young trees to stretch towards the sun.

Moist air supports rotting wood, fungi and a hundred kinds insects.

Just inside the woods

the stream ceases its flow

and becomes a wooded wetland

with skunk cabbage and cinnamon fern and stinking anaerobic mud.

Birch, Beech and Willow Oak

are still live in the slowly rising water.

Black leaves and brown water rings mark at least a years standing water. A beaver pond ahead?

The trees show stress

from standing in water.

There is a flash in the gloom -

bare, beaver-gnawed birch,

a white beacon through the shadow.

**95**

Dead pointed stumps of trees

emerge from the water.

With the slap of its tail

a beaver disappears ,

its lodge in the distance.

A new beaver dam backing up

two feet of water

is killing trees

The wetland is filling with silt.

A redwing blackbird

lands on the beaver lodge

and a Blue-winged Teal

explodes from the beaver pond.

Strawberries bloom on the mud.

The constant is slow inevitable change.

+++++

**TIDEWATER FALL**

November in Maryland.

Rockville in the fall with

violets and wild strawberries,

crisp wild grapes,

colored leaves falling,

sunny afternoons.

The cold and election day is coming.

Last minute legislation is passed

so Congressmen can go home

looking like heroes.

Some things never change.

+++++

**96**

**SMOKY MOUNTAIN MORNING FROM THE AIR**

**0630**

Black islands

floating

on a frothy white sea of mist

**0700**

Like a giant photographic negative

greenish gray irregularities

develop on a wispy white field.

Peaks floating over fog filled valleys.

**0715**

Foggy valleys through the hills

writhing like white dragons

in a primeval gray haze.

+++++

**97**

**BLACK HORIZON-**

**the Vietnam Memorial**

Walk across the Mall from the Smithsonian

to a T-shirt stand by the crosswalk.

Cross the street and climb the hill

to the Washington Monument encircled

with flags and hundreds of people

waiting in line.

Descend the hill to the Reflecting Pool.

The Lincoln Memorial

squats on the west end.

The Capitol and Washington Monument reflect erectly to the east.

A father is telling his sons about

an anti-war protest

when a million people filled the Mall

and one of the boys asks,

"Like in Forest Gump?"

A tent of a hunger striker.

He is lying in the grass

protesting.

**98**

Walk up and over a berm

and through some small trees.

Descending the berm a grove

of trees appears. The green of grass surrenders as, under the trees,

a black horizon dawns in the afternoon sun.

A memorial,

a black marble mass takes shape.

All those names and none were personal friends. This is a monument

to a young man's war.

Flowers,

a service jacket with ribbons,

a box with a medal.

People touching the wall, some weeping,

others making paper impressions

of special names.

We all owe God a death,

but this death should have some value.

It’s a long, slow walk back

beside the Reflecting Pool

as joggers puff past and

resident squirrels

investigate half full garbage cans.

+++++

**99**

ECOVIEW

No.4

St Louis

to Minneapolis

Not your usual neighborhood

art show!!

Carl Lahser

**100**

**Ecoview** **No. 4** is the fourth of a series of geographic portraits. It contains a sensitive, mater-of-fact, and possibly controversial collection of verbal ecological pictures of St. Louis, Minneapolis, Milwaukee and environs. Snow. Trees. Neighborhoods. No politics or political associations. Neither for nor against anything in particular, these are observations, just the way I see things. Feel free to disagree. Even I sometimes change my mind rereading some of these insights

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**101**

**St Louis, MO, 1995**

Today’s St Louis and yesterday’s are, in some ways , as different as night and day but some things defy change.

**FIVE FOR ST LOUIS '95**

**ST LOUIS CENTER**

The painted steel panels

of the St Louis Center

fits the prevailing brick architecture

of down town St Louis

like a fez fits an Irishman.

+++++

**METRO**

Clean cars but the tunnels?

bare rusting iron, graffiti,

contractors chalk marks,

dark caverns behind chain link.

+++++

**STITCHING IT TOGETHER**

Restoring old structures -

cutting them apart

and stitching them up again

with someoneelse's heart.

+++++

**102**

**WINTER WALKS DOWN SIXTH STREET**

The sky turned gray

and a cold blast of wind

walked down Sixth Street

shaking leaves

off the Bradford pear trees.

+++++

**FIRST IMPRESSION**

Red brick warehouses covered with soot.

Steamy sidewalk grates

smelling of urine and stagnant water.

A wino

offering used condoms for sale, cheap.

These impressions greeted me

in July of 1956.

Now the urban renewal arch

and skyscrapers grow

from century old roots

plowed under.

+++++

**103**

**A St Louis Bus Ride, Union Street North, ‘95**

Neighborhoods of row houses

sooted brick of different hues

steep slate or copper roofs

Blocks of brick shotgun houses

with windows boarded up

but vegetable gardens in the rear.

"No Trespassing" signs abound.

Stores not boarded up

have bars on windows and doors.

A dead catalpa tree

stands behind the burned-out shell

of someone's dreams.

Black catalpa seed pods,

two feet long, hang

like blighted Christmas ornaments.

Emanuel Baptist Church

has black iron bars

on doors and windows.

A maple standing in a blaze of red.

Yellow leaves on ash and elm trees and

leafless honey locusts shiver in the 'hood.

St Marks Freewill Baptist Church -

"God Loves You" under gang colors.

One half a duplex decorated for Halloween.

The bus route ends

at the cemetery.

+++++

**104**

**Union Station, Then and Now**

1956 was my breaking away year:

high school graduation,

leaving home for the first time,

active duty in the Air Force Reserve,

passing through Union Station in St Louis,

electronics school at Scott AFB.

My family and my girl friend

saw me on to the Missouri-Pacific

with my Air Force ticket to St Louis

a sleeperette but no meal ticket

for a 24 hour thousand mile ride.

The next day at noon,

a thousand miles from San Antonio,

the train pulled into Union Station.

A hundred other trains

in the biggest building I had ever seen.

A crystal chandelier,

a gold leaf ceiling

and stained glass windows -

it looked more like a cathedral.

**105**

Trains went away and airplane travel

became the way to go

One day travel time instead of three to five days

by train or bus.

Union Station,

the crossroad of America

abandoned.

Twice as many people

passed through Union Station

as now pass through the Lambert Field.

The twenty acre wreck

was bought for a million and a half.

It took another $150 million

to restore Union Station

to near original architectural glory,

but it is now a destination

not a transfer point

with a hotel and a zillion shops

and not a train in sight.

+++++

**106**

**Heartland**

Illinois and Missouri in the winter is a different world. Its a world of creeks and fences, roads and winding paths.

**Illinois Winter**

**1. Winter Creeks**

A white winding path peeks

from beneath

overhanging leafless trees,

snow covered ice

a stream

hidden in a shady deep freeze

**2. Winter Fields**

Black and brown fields,

fence lines and roads

scribbled upon by a white crayon

ice and snow standingin swales and furrows

waiting for the warm erasing sun.

+++++

**107**

**Missouri Farmland**

Section lines marked by narrow roads

Tan and rusty red fields

overlaid by green dendritic patterns

of trees along streams

Streams join larger streams and

white sand crescents flash

through the trees

like an African necklace

+++++

**RUSTY RED ISLANDS**

Hundreds of rusty red islands

in a sea of green

Fields and forest

in the autumn sun

+++++

**108**

**Minneapolis/St Paul MN**

The home of the biggest mall in the country and Mary Tyler Moore. Nine months of winter and three months of poor sledding.

**Minneapolis Spring Evening**

A cold, wet April evening settles

on the still-bare trees

and brick streets.

I look up and see

a tall, blue-green glass building

almost invisible

against blue-gray clouds

spitting snow.

Where are the flowers and

the stars of spring?

+++++

**PEREGRINE FALCON IN A CANYON OF GLASS**

Look down Marquette Street in Minneapolis

Look up at buildings

of steel and mirrored blue and green glass

It looks surrealistic,

a cold canyon

of blue sky and ice.

A pair of Peregrine Falcons appear.

One stoops and takes an unwary pigeon

the scene reflected

in cold green glass.

The tough survive.

+++++

**109**

**Minneapolis Spring**

A bleak gray dawn breaks

over Minneapolis.

It's 30 degrees warm

and spitting snow.

A cold false dawn sharpens the view

of soot blackened

brick buildings.

I see eleven stacks eye level

with my sixth floor window

discharging water vapor

and hot stack gasses

horizontally

curling

downward

creating an inversion

an air stagnation

bubble.

This is spring?

+++++

**110**

Milwaukee WS

Views of the land of lakes and dairy products in the early spring.

**Wisconsin Lakes**

The State of Wisconsin

is measled with lakes

and prairie potholes

of all sizes,

their cold water

reflecting the afternoon sun.

And Lake Michigan,

lying to the east,

disappears into the overcast

separated from the land

by a strip of white sand

glowing in the heavy spring air.

+++++

**A Milwaukee Hotel Swimming Pool**

May is still spring cool.

Willows are in leaf and

buds on other trees

are breaking.

Bluegrass turf is ready to mow.

Tulips and hyacinths are blooming.

Whitewing doves have paired and

are looking for nesting sites.

The hotel pool is empty

but for a pair of mallards

sitting in the shallow end.

Will they share with the other guests

when the water comes?

+++++

**111**

**ECOVIEW**

**No.5**

**Southwest**

Not your usual

neighborhood

art show!!

**carl lahser**

**112**

**Ecoview** **No. 5** is the fifth of a series of poetographic portraits. It contains a sensitive, mater-of-fact, and possibly controversial collection of verbal ecological pictures of New Mexico, Arizona, and California. Trees. Neighborhoods. No politics or political associations. Neither for nor against anything in particular, these are observations, just the way I see things. Feel free to disagree. Even I sometimes change my mind rereading some of these insights

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**113**

**New Mexico**

**Albuquerque Sunrise**

Sunrise was not all that impressive this day

In a windless, cloudless sky

the east turned white

and scattered creosote bushes

exploded from the shadows of the night.

A blinding white sun leaped

over the Sandia Mountains.

A warm breeze stirred

blowing away the night’s cool.

+++++

**RINCONADA CANYON**

West of the Rio Grande River

Below Mesa Prieta

Rinconada Canyon slices

into the volcanic escarpment.

Steep slopes where rest

thousands of boulders

of black-faced vesicular basalt

Black boulders with

a white star!

a spiral!

a bird facing east!

Hundreds of Pueblo petrogylphs.

Ancient graffiti

mixed with recent graffiti

of the interlopers unknown

but now immortal

under the desert sun.

+++++

**114**

**ALBUQUERQUE’S BLOWING DUST**

To the southwest

the mountains disappear in a cloud of tan.

Plastic bags and tumbleweeds

hang on dusty eddy currents

above the rolling cloud of sand.

There is a moment of panic

as the wind grabs your clothes.

Before you can turn it beats you

with tumbleweeds and biting sand.

In seconds the dust and wind pass over us

double-timing it towards the north and east.

+++++

**Albuquerque Sun line**

At six AM the sky is blue but the Valley is in shadow

The sun touches the western rim

and the sun line marches east along I-40

towards the Rio Grande.

Tops of downtown high rises glow like Easter eggs

above trees still in shadow.

The sun line walks east on old route 66.

Shadows shrink as the sun crawls down

the walls of tall buildings into empty parking lots.

As I drive west on Central

the shadow of my car is a block long

then a hundred yards long

then a hundred feet long

under a clear blue sky.

+++++

**115**

**Funny Little Snow Storm**

To the east under sparkling blue sky

the Sandia Mountains were crowned with snow.

Across the Rio Grande River

virga danced with black clouds

as we wound our way into town.

When we left the hotel for lunch

large fluffy flakes were drifting down

The blue sky was now milky white

and little ice pellets littered the ground.

In just a few minutes the west side

of parked cars, cactus and Blue Spruce trees

were painted with white but starting to melt

as the thermometer sat on forty degrees.

The snow was run out of town by noon

and clear weather returned one more time.

Muddy slush was thrown onto windshields

and streets steamed as the water sublimed.

The wind came up and it sure felt cold

then the dust began to blow

and by the end of the day the was no trace

of this funny little storm of snow.

+++++

**116**

**Sandia Tramway in Spring**

The Sandia Peak Tram's two gondolas

can carry you from summer to winter

from desert to arctic

in 20 minutes, in about 3 miles, up 3000 feet

We left the Rio Grande flood plain behind

and entered the Sonoran desert

then ventured into the cooler foothills

of the Sandia Mountains

Up and out over Domingo Baca Canyon

Over cactus, tasajillo and sage brush

Over sandstone boulders on rocky ridges

Walls and pinnacles of tilted stone

Piñon pines stuck into the canyon walls

A light dusting of snow bleaching everything.

Clouds of blowing snow and wind gusts

swing the gondola

Breaks in the clouds reveal

snow covered branching canyons and Christmasy flocked trees

We slow and dock

and cross an icy deck at 10,000 feet

Thermometer says a brisk 10 degrees cold

Scenic vistas lie hidden somewhere

beyond a hundred feet of visibility

I'm not about to ride the chair lift down today

down to the desert and shirt-sleeve weather.

+++++

**117**

**Little Bit of the Road to Oz**

Albuquerque sits on an historic intersection,

Route 66 crosses the Rio Grande River.

The highway was important in its day

but nothing lasts forever.

US Highway 66 now runs parallel to I-40

into town where it becomes Central Ave.

Some historic motels and restaurants remain

but a helping of nostalgia is the most they have.

Many cars on the way

to points west

stopped to stay a mile high

deferring the desert trip

to Dream City - L.A.

Route 66,

a modern horizontal petroglyph.

+++++

**118**

**Arizona**

**Heat**

Remember getting into a car

on a hot afternoon

or opening a oven door

to check baking bread?

That was Gila Bend

just stepping outside

into dry 117 degree heat.

+++++

**Whiteflies**

Whiteflies swarming

drifting horizontally

in the still air

like snowflakes

in a blizzard.

+++++

**A Lonely Palm**

A mature California Palm

stands stark

against a clear blue morning sky

leaves hanging limply

in the still morning chill.

**+++++**

**Cactus Wren**

A dozen large saguaro cactus

are available

but a cactus wren

sat singing

atop a taller power pole

claiming all he could see.

+++++

**119**

**Saguaros**

West and north and south of Phoenix

stand thousands

of ribbed desert sentries,

ancient arms raised like traffic cops.

Guarding the Sonoran Desert.

Feeding bats and moths pollen

Housing woodpeckers and owls

Protecting nests of doves.

+++++

**Shelter Caves**

Shallow caves,

created by lava flows or

carved by wind-blown sand,

housed of wandering groups

of several tribes

over ten thousand years.

Only their pottery and tools survive.

+++++

**Petroglyphs**

Petroglyphs

pecked in vesicular basalt,

tell tales,

left messages,

gave directions,

expressed emotions,

praised the spirits,

honored the dead.

+++++

**120**

Sunrise on Luke AFB

A white sun vaults full-grown over the horizon

like pickup headlights over a rise in the road.

Chili mesquite, Palo Verde and prickly pear

cast long grotesque shadows.

A Crissal Thrasher explodes off of its nest

hidden in a clump of cholla

then sits in a mesquite

flicking its tail

scolding the sun.

A pair of doves sits cooing

in a bare desert willow.

Fresh fox scat steams

in the morning cool.

An F-16 clears its engines for take-off

minutes too late to hang up the sun.

The roar wakens sleepy heads

and sings the night crew to sleep.

Luke's day is off to a roaring start.

+++++

**121**

**Sensations**

It is an awesome feeling

to walk rocky desert trails,

to sit in caves that protected man

from this same hot sun

when this land was pinon forest,

the same sun that dried and warmed the land

formed this desert.

+++++

**Arizona Sunset**

A sliver moon hangs

two hours behind the sun

almost lost in thin flamingo clouds

Two doves fly south below the moon.

+++++

**122**

**California**

**Starbucks**

Cute little coffee bar without poetry?

What would Ginsberg think?

Like a ham sandwich without rye

It’s enough to drive a poet to drink.

+++++

**SoCal Beaches**

Rough beaches along US 101

are now hidden in state parks

along the Coast Highway

The water is still cold and

the currents are still bad

Dedicated surfers still have to sing

still jump fences to get wet

Car tops sport racks

for surf boards

encased in protective covers

No more

hundred pound

12 foot

mahogany surf boards

or balsa and fiberglass boards

or bogie boards

or flying saucers.

Light boards are now made of fiberglass

with two keels

and bungee cords around the ankle.

Looks a lot easier and safer.

+++++

**123**

**San Diego Overview**

San Diego had only 570,000 people in 1958.

It has grown 300,000 in 36 years

and the County population doubled.

Once it was a Navy town

with half a hundred bars along Broadway

now gone with urban renewal.

Fleet landing was where Navy wives

could be picked up and got in the sack

before the liberty boat

had husbands and lovers to their ships.

It's now a respectable park.

The Coronado ferry is long gone

replaced with a high curving bridge.

The Spanish and Mexican heritage

has been replaced by yuppieism

a tourist mecca with parking meters

and entrance fees into our missions.

San Diego has blossomed

with palm and bougainvilla and pelagorium.

Fire resistant Ice-plant has invaded

highway right-of-ways and hillsides

greening the area.

It’s still cool and damp

and the fog hangs over Point Loma,

but the good life as I remember

is gone, gone with numerosity,

drowned in a sea of people,

lost in a bevy,

adrift in a cloud,

an unorganized hive of vehicles,

a maze of freeways.

**124**

The surf is changeless

but the call of the beach

has become less compelling

muffled and filtered through

a fine mesh of bureaucracy

parking meters and pollution.

Piers and groins and breakwaters

stop the sand migration

and dump it into the unrecoverable depths.

Thermal pollution of power plants,

freshwater pollution by storm drains,

and untreated sewage

gives swimmers the itch and crud.

Overregulated vehicle exhaust

whitens the skies and burns the eyes.

It was not perfect 40 years ago,

but half today's population and regulations

attracted today's population

that is fouling its nest.

**+++++**

**125**

**MESEMBRYANTHEMUM**

California Ice-plant,

this fire resistant succulent

used to be called

Mesembryanthemum

But a botanist looked at the Fig-Marigolds

and decided this musical name

was no longer valid

and changed it to

Cryophytum crystallinum

Pretty but not quite so melodious

+++++

**Santa Ysabel**

Sixteen miles east of Ramona beyond

winding Highway 78's

rocky canyons and bleak hills

live a couple hundred people

in the town of Santa Ysabel.

Mission Santa Ysabel,

a grocery,

a bakery,

a general store and school.

Buffalo T-bone steak was $18 a pound

but the cider was fresh and cold.

+++++

**California Traffic Sign**

I-5 North Use Right Lane

but not at this intersection

where the right lane must turn

and not the next intersection

which goes to I-5 South.

Finally, behind door number three

is the I-5 North ramp. ++++

**126**

**Windmills of Palm Springs**

Forty years ago Signal Hill

near Long Beach

was scarred and black

from and with pumping oil wells.

Today a hundred hills sprout

giant white three-bladed windmills

taking energy from the wind and sun

All energy is not the same.

+++++

**L.A. News, Thursday May 9**

A 71 year old grandmother

holds up a gas station

for money to pay back taxes

A city bus is hijacked

and held hostage for two hours

A celebrity goes berserk

shouting obscenities at traffic

with a loaded gun in his pocket

A battering husband shoots his wife

in front of his son

and is killed by deputies

Weather is smoggy and mild

Pollen is up - Eucalyptus and Avocado

+++++

**127**

**Leaving California Feeling Good**

My vacation is over.

My summer is through.

We all grow up and

there is still plenty to do.

Driving to San Diego

to catch a plane

we passed through Camp Pendelton

where Marine Corps reigns

Off the coast were anchored war ships

for games on the beach

to get Marines ready to grasp

whatever we ask them to reach.

On the perimeter road along I-5

raced three Bradley fighting machines.

The lead one carried the stars and stripes

and each had a dozen marines.

I tooted the horn and gave them thumbs up.

Each of them with a full field pack

shouted, "Semper Fi" and saluted

and each of them waved back.

Orgasmic!

+++++

**128**

**129**

**ECOVIEW**

**No. 6**

**Green Things and Things that Move**

**Not your usual**

**neighborhood**

**art show!!**

**Carl Lahser**

**130**

**ECOVIEW No. 6** contains personal glimpses of plants, birds, insects and other invertebrates at different times of the year in various parts of the world over the past fifty years. I hope these pictures are informative, enlightening, entertaining and generate a feeling of reverence for nature.

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**131**

**Fossils**

**Fossil Mind**

In the midst of a Cretaceous fossil bed,

A hillside of marine animals

50 million years dead.

A submerged reef of oysters turned to stone

exposed to the western sun.

Time has flown

and the sea has gone. The shells remain

mute evidence that nothing is permanent

but change.

+++++

**132**

**Invertebrates**

**Mosquitoes in My Motel Room**

When I opened the door and turned on the light

mosquitoes were lurking just waiting to bite.

I swatted and squashed for a minute or two

and they disappeared right into the blue.

I turned on the sink and flushed out a couple

and one from the overflow compounded my trouble.

I turned on the tub and three more were washed out

then two more flew out of the drain with a pout.

They hid in the drapes and under the chairs

and hummed about blood that soon would be theirs.

Stop! I can't take any more.

I threw on some clothes and ran out the door

to find a bug bomb

to kill these blood sucking ladies and even their mom.

I sprayed half a can. There. That should be enough

that is, if these swamp ladies were not super tough.

I backed out the door to wait 'til they died

but out in the courtyard was one I could ride

so I ran for the car and left the same night

straight back to West Texas where tall tales don't bite.

+++++

**133**

**Heliconian Night**

A tropical Florida hammock sits

surrounded by sawgrass and ankle-deep water.

Soil piled a foot above the water

supports satinwood, cherry laurel,

two large manchineel and several gumbo limbos.

The hammock’s outer edge is festooned

with the vines of Dodder and Passion flower.

Black and yellow striped Heliconian butterflies

float slowly in the still humid air.

Evening falls swiftly and the Heliconian butterflies

begin to gather on a dead branch

of a Eugenia inside the hammock.

Half a hundred are settled for the night

as the full moon rises out of the marsh.

About three hours up, the moon finds a hole

in the foliage and a shaft of moonlight

strikes the butterflies like a blow.

They chitter softly and disperse like

confetti falling upward.

They settle on another branch

softly, creaking softly as the settle down.

+++++

**Urban Lightning Bug**

A lightning bug winking a cool green light

flew down the sidewalk

in Bethesda Maryland

landed on the hand of an entomologist.

Lightning bugs and entomologist

are both rare in the city.

+++++

**134**

**Termite Swarm**

An Amazon termite swarm filled the night.

At dawn they had shed their wings of flight

and several large queens ran about the deck

each with several males in tow

like a convoy of 18 wheelers on a trek

+++++

**Banana Slug**

Along a trail through

the Olympic rain forest

a banana slug blocked my path.

Yellow with large black spots,

an imposing three inch presence.

+++++

**Army Ants**

I had heard stories of Army Ants

charging through the jungle

devouring everything in their path.

A gross exaggeration

but they are vicious.

Their three inch trail disappears

into the undergrowth within a few feet both ways.

A misstep on the trail

resulted in three quick bites

and quick forays by the ants

to see if I was anything to eat.

+++++

**135**

**'96 MONARCH KILL**

What irony, to fly 3000 miles

to escape the cold and snow

but die in a freak snow storm

in the mountains of Mexico.

Six thousand square miles in Michoacan state

protect the orange and black butterfly,

but the jet stream dropped south

and the cold and snow

caused 20 million Monarchs to die.

A ’92 storm killed half a billion Monarchs.

From this they can recover

but not from cutting and burning the forest.

Our children may see them never.

+++++

**136**

**CROWN OF THORNS STARFISH**

**I**

Crown of Thorns!

Acanthaster!

Reefs all gone.

Man cries, "Disaster!"

"Not to worry," sings the sea.

"No hurry, time is the Master."

**II**

Crown of Thorns.

Typhoon spawned and

nurtured by high island rains

it vanishes into the reef.

After five years of growth in seclusion

it bursts onto the scene

en masse to devour its coral home

and disappear again.

Pacific atolls have the Crown of Thorns

but not the typhoon-fed periodic blight

that devours a dozen species of coral

around high islands.

A dead white reef of stony coral

is not a pleasant sight.

Inspection reveals only a few species dominated

and this forced recolonization

restores biodiversity

and health to the reef.

+++++

**137**

**Deer Flies, Daughters of Mars**

Like small vicious hawks

deer flies attacked anything that moved

like moose and man and bear.

Females of the genus Chry'sops

bit out chunks of flesh and drank blood

like a party animal drinks beer.

These pretty colored biting flies

ran caribou crazy on warm windless afternoons.

Moose cows submerged to escape the bites.

The moose bulls, fed up, crashed through

arctic willow and beaked hazel brush

with all their frantic might.

We cast our favorite wet flies

dressed in a head net, long sleeves and gloves.

Lunch of beans and trout remained untouched

but we crudely ate lunch with our gloves on

cause exposed skin received vicious bites.

Deer flies were almost too much.

A vector for rabbit fever

and a bane of the arctic realm

these flies disappeared with the setting sun.

Supper should have been no problem

except that at twilight

mosquitoes began having their fun.

The arctic adventure was over

but my wrists had a number of scars.

I miss the trout and the caribou

but not those colorful daughters of Mars.

+++++

**138**

**BIRDS**

**Shrikes Courting**

A masked female Loggerhead Shrike

(Lanius ludovicianus)

lands on the top wire of a barbed wire fence.

A male soon lands beside her

with a gift in his beak,

a really nice stick for building a nest.

She ignores him.

He flies off and shortly returns

with an outstanding piece of twine

which she also rejects.

Undaunted he leaves again

and returns with a small lizard,

an Anole (Anolis carolinensis)

hanging limply from his beak

which she accepts.

She disembowels the Anole

and devours parts of it

while the male looks on apprehensively.

Sated, she impales the remainder of the Anole

on a barb and flies off

followed closely by the lucky male,

the perfect cold-blooded couple.

+++++

**139**

**The Cozumel Bananaquit**

We just arrived at Chankanab Park on Cozumel

when a little bird landed in a coconut tree.

Black striped head and a white throat,

the Cozumel Bananaquit nibbled

coconut flowers and posed for me.

+++++

**The Tropicbird and the Moon**

**The**

**afternoon**

**moon**

**was two days from full and three hours out of the sea**

**when a Tropicbird**

**with long, forked tail**

**and coal black wings**

**gliding,**

**gliding,**

**flew over**

**the moon.**

+++++

**140**

**Washington Doves**

On the cold, wet morn of the first day of spring

a pair of whitewing doves

pick at the litter in the gutter

for food and nesting material.

A few miles away another dove picks

at the defense budget to feather his nest

with the support of protestors

who shun the Viet Nam Memorial.

+++++

**Five Egrets**

It was evening by the pool

at the Cancun Clipper Club and

a full moon claimed the sky.

Pool and hotel lights

softly lit the scene with flitting reflections.

Five white egrets spooked from the lagoon

flew over the pool white against the black sky

challenging the moon.

+++++

**A Lucky Worm**

A January Robin with a bright orange breast

lands in the wet Florida grass

and sits flicking his wings.

He drops his wings to see and hear better

flicking his tail side to side

hoping to scare up breakfast.

A lucky cold earthworm does not move

and the robin hops away

looking for more lively prey.

+++++

**141**

**Forgiven or Forgotten**

A rocky rookery of black and white

Murres and Turres is relatively quiet.

Parents with bulging crops

are returning from the sea

to disgorge half digested fish

into their waiting chicks

and relieve nest-weary mates.

An ominous shadow glides over the colony and

everything freezes except one lost chick.

A gull-like Skua lands nearby.

It strides up and devours the chick

as parents mutter and squawk and

peck ceremoniously.

The ogre, who ignores these paper tigers, leaves and normality returns.

Forgiven or forgotten?

+++++

**Downtown Geese**

Downtown Anchorage projects upwards

as a dozen twenty story buildings.

Geese, forming up to fly south,

navigate through

and around

these obstacles

at the ten-story level

in long, honking Vees.

They circle

and turn southward

in the late September sun.

+++++

**142**

**ANIMALS**

**Moose Passing**

Snow.

White.

Glaring

in the sun.

Squawking

as we walk.

Moose tracks!

They lead through

closely cropped willows.

Two dozen light weight

moose pellets

and a still steaming

patch of yellow snow.

Snow.

Drifting over our tracks

and the evidence

of the passing moose.

+++++

**Sea Lion Pup**

On the dark rocky beach at La Push

lay a four month old sea lion pup,

forty pounds of dirty white fur

with black spots and large dreamy eyes.

She helplessly watched the beach

waiting for night, the tide and Momma

to return.

+++++

**143**

**Roosevelt Elk**

Along the road near the Queets River

An elk stepped into the road

crossed and quickly disappeared into the forest.

Another follows and, likewise, quickly disappeared.

A third elk stops in full profile and looks directly at me

then regally steps behind the curtain of trees

but the play continues.

+++++

**Mount St. Helens Bulls**

The old herd died in the volcanic blast

but a new herd has taken its place.

A hundred bull elk lay

in the sun in the gray ash

along the Toutle River

waiting patiently for green grass

and the fall rutting season.

+++++

**144**

**Do Bears do it in the Woods?**

In an aspen grove

in Canada

in June

Bear tracks.

Toes pointing towards me.

We didn't meet.

Several aspens trees with

bear marks.

A hungry bear had climbed

to eat a just-waking-up salad

of vitamin-rich

aspen flowers

Stepping over a fallen log

I find a huge pile of

odorless,

green

bear dung.

I have finally discovered

the answer-

yes!

+++++

**145**

**PLANTS**

**Lawns and Biodiversity**

Lawns are green.

That's all most see

until they look close

at the minutiae.

There’s dull green of Bermudasgrass

And bright green of St Augustine

Emerald green of Zoysia

And a hundred flowers unseen.

Blue half flowers of Lobelia,

Yellow dots of Crigia,

kidney-shaped leaves of Dichondra

with inconspicuous flowers,

Euphorbia, Sida and Molluga,

the list is inexhaustible.

I could go on for hours.

A lawn by definition

Is a monoculture

But ,as any fool can see

most lawns are a mix

of everything green.

Hurrah for biodiversity.

+++++

**146**

**Fall Color**

Fallen Tuliptree leaves

Like bright yellow gold duck's feet

turn brown and twirl to the ground

Red oak leaves with scarlet teeth

still have green veins and

shield a few green leaves near the trunk.

Tall beech trees with orange leaves

that turn brown before they fall

replace the yellow flowers of late summer.

Maple and sweet gum leaves.

Their pointed scarlet melodies

provide a visual counterpoint to

the crunch of dry brown leaves.

+++++

**A Maple Leaf in November**

Three lobes with bright yellow veins

The green becoming brownish

with an overlay of a red and orange wash

lying on the wet sidewalk.

+++++

**147**

**Sidewalk Images**

Bigtooth maple leaves,

giant Bur oak leaves

lying on the sidewalk

soaked by a cold drizzle

that collects and washes

the sooty concrete.

The leaves dry

and crumble

and blow away

leaving dark stencils

on clean pavement.

+++++

**Smoky Mountain Back Roads**

Narrow two lane roads with no shoulders.

Rippling streams with pools and boulders.

Pine trees with kudzu, crows and chickadees,

fallen logs with moss and carpenter bees.

Highways disappear into fog most days,

the mountain ranges silhouetted in a smoky haze.

Oak Ridge labs nestled in the wooded hills

with Plutonium 'neath the mud of cool, clear rills.

Endangered species -birds and clams-

contend with open pit mines and TVA dams.

Land of progress and contrast -

modern technology and a Rebel past.

+++++



What I see. What I saw. What I remember.

What I imagined. This is just a sample of looking back

75 years. Childhood. Adulthood. Now oldhood.