PREFACE

We wish to thank the talented writers who shared their deeply personal stories of inspiration, love, heartbreak, family, and life experiences through their creative works.

The writing in this book gives insight into the people and places of Oklahoma from Altus to Ft. Cobb, Poteau to Woodward and everywhere in between.

We know you will find this poetry to be as beautiful and diverse as the people of this great state. Enjoy!

~ 39th Annual Oklahoma Conference on Aging Committee
May 2014
THE ELEPHANT AND THE CAT

An elephant sits upon my chest.  
After the please don't let me die prayer,  
after ten hours of gloved hands whittling,  
the creature has come to rest.  
Immaculately wrapped in white gauze and tape,  
he takes up all the space.  
I cannot see his eyes.  
"How long will I have the elephant?" - the question,  
"He will gradually disappear." - the answer.  
"I have nothing at home to feed him."

I was warned to expect a Mack truck,  
not a heavy beast.  
"You are very lucky.  
He only comes to special people."  
Nurses giggle in the hall.

The pachyderm goes home with me.  
Traveling in a wheelchair,  
I carry him on my breastbone.  
Throughout the ride he doesn't move,  
and I do not feel special.

He doesn't lose an ounce,  
but smashes, crushes and  
grinds me into the sheets  
until I become a thin film of pain  
melting into the mattress.

The cat jumps onto my bed.  
Sniffing, he tiptoes onto my chest,  
and the heaviness increases.  
Ears back, nose down, flicking tail, soft growls.  
Disapproving of the elephant, he hisses.

He looks me in the eye and moans,  
"Is this what you've become?"  
Leaping down, he runs away.
They bring me soup and crackers.
They bring me cookies and ice cream.
They do not bring my cat.

But late at night in murky darkness
-- the great beast must be sleeping --
I feel a plop on the side of the bed
and tiny footsteps toward me.
With stealth, the cat creeps to my head.
He licks my face, kisses my eyelids, sips my tears.
Sharing my pillow, he stretches to touch my neck, my shoulders.
With clawless paws he massages,
purring at motorboat throttle,
now kneading, kneading bread.

Lynda Stephenson
Edmond, OK
Where There’s a Will

Ups and Downs

With upward pull
and downward tug
woodlands battle
opposing forces.

Tall trees climb
toward the sky.
Leaves reach for light
as roots pull downward,
a thirst for ground water.

We, too, feel the battle
of earthly forces,
the balance of upward
and downward pressures.

Inspiration and aspiration
draw us toward heights
but humanly forces
pull us down.

What we aspire to be
is bigger and better
than what we are so
we face our shortcomings.

We stand with an upward push,
aware there’s a tendency to fall,
but also knowing that we have
no human virtues
without temptation,
and that our souls have
balance between the two.

Ann Champeau
Norman, OK
Tapestry

As a sun peeking o’re the horizon
spills streams and sparks of fire
into the tint of night sky,
love pours light into a dark life.

Bubbles of joy burst, erasing
the deep sorrow of loneliness,
leaving pools of calm, of peace
mingled with shards of broken storms.

A baby’s cry, children’s laughter,
sobs of despair create a mosaic
held together with blooms and thorns,
silky softness joined with ragged roughness.

Hand clasped in hand join two
whose hearts entwine with one beat,
lasting year after year together
through eternity, even after death.

Vivian Zabel
Edmond, OK
Who Will Do This?

Who, with Wordsworth's vision closed,
will ponder the dancing daffodils,
observe how cats love window sills?
Who will do this for us, if not you?

Who will visit the coffee houses,
inhale the drift of espresso roast,
or at Museum Café lift a toast?
Who will do this for us, if not you?

Who, in mist on a country road,
in silence, alone or hand in hand,
will marvel at doe and fawn crossing the land?
Who will do this for us, if not you?

Who will bring a needed hug
to the child whose father has run away,
whose tears speak all that she can say?
Who will do this for us, if not you?

The last gathering of poets and artists has begun.
If you are able, bring a poem to recite or a song to sing,
bring to us all you have known and lived, bring that.
Yes. *That* is what you must bring.

If not you, then whom shall we seek?
If you are silent, then who shall speak?

Erick D. Porter
The Village, OK
PAPA'S THERE

In hills of flint, hickory's yellow with
scarlet oaks and black gum's crimson
Papa's there ----

In rich mountain valleys, black and deep,
Wild strawberries, blackberry, meadowlark,
Papa's there ----

In wood smoke dying with the evening
wind, smell of country ham, cackle of hen
Papa's there ----

In sounds of daybreak, frosty cold, wood fire growing,
owl's last call, rooster's hello
Papa's there----

In timber cleared fields, broken to plow, whistle
of quail, clank of milk pail
Papa's there ----

In distant call of hunting hound, hunting horn,
axe's ring, calf's born
Papa's there ----

In the smell of smokehouse and sugar cured hams,
hickory chips, walnuts on the ground
Papa's there ----

In summer's heat, springhouse trips, dark water,
cold buttermilk, waterdogs,
Papa's there ----

In boyhood hunts, for man and boy, squirrels
(the excuse of being together)
huckleberries as fare
Papa's there ----

In trees and plants named and shown, shame weed,
watercress, limestone fern, time to give, love to share
Papa's there ----

In love's perfect place, a soul's retreat, Life's quest,
rest, memory -
Papa's there ----

Carl B. Reed
Altus, OK
At Blue Hole, Santa Rosa

El Perro Negro* dozes by the fence
and keeps an apathetic vigil at
Dolores's** feet. Her fingers twine the mesh;
she bores her nose within a diamond like
a naughty child observing chalkboard shame.
Her black eyes shun the glances of Gringo guests
who marvel at her desert's stunning pool--
lazuli crystal water coming down
in eighty feet of unexpected cool.

Behind her back my Debra rends the screen:
"He looks just like a dog I had called 'Bear. ""
Dolores drops the fence, relaxes, turns:
so primed, her talk erupts artesan-like
but warm as Blue Hole's overflow is cold.
While Debra stokes the conversation stream
they talk as women talk--about the spring,
of diving schools, the cost of SCUBA fees,
of college kids who come for practice dives,
and local folk who can't afford the gear.
When Deb depicts her swimming college daughter
they laugh she'd come to study diving here,

They don't converse of probably-different faiths,
or where their forebears immigrated from,
or of Dolores's lilting Latin tongue
or roots of Deb's scholastic cadenced tones,
Deb doesn't say her kids would fit right in
with Santa Rosa's sunning girls and boys
enhancing native earthly hues of skin.

Their bonds pursue our walk to where we parked
the car, and Perro Negro mopes along,
ignores his owner's animated talk.
He never shows the color of his eyes
but drags his shaggy beard to sweep the dust
that desert winds deposit on the walk.
We guess he rarely feels caresses, must
hear naught to salve his own dolores.

Richard Kahoe, Ph.D., Woodward, OK

*The Black Dog **dolores = sorrows, griefs
Women’s Division

(in alphabetical order by last name)
MERRY CHRISTMAS, LITTLE SIS!

I want to wish you a Merry Christmas, Little Sis, my dear
Like I sentimentally have for the past 66 years.

But suddenly you quietly slipped away
In a brilliant, gold and red heavenly bound sleigh.

Wonderful, loving, giving parents had we
An older brother and sister were in our family.

I was born before you with dark auburn hair
You, Valerie Jean, entered the world with blonde curls so fair.

We were only 20 months apart and we laughed and played
And pulled each other around in a shiny red wagon for days.

We shared dolls, toys, popsicles and clothes and built backyard tents
We really grew up knowing what shared life meant.

We happily decorated our two story flagstone home’s sidewalks
With beautiful, fat pastel pink, blue and green chalk.

Together we learned to ride tricycles
And then we mounted the bicycles.

Soon came school, careers, marriage, children and life’s laughs and tears
Close, loving sisters we always remained through the years.

I will always celebrate our lives as close sisters true
I have enlightened, humorous and joyful memories of us renewed.

Merry Christmas, Little Sis, in the peaceful, heavenly realm so high
Your fragrant Christmas tree is glowing with heaven’s twinkling stars so bright.

Now you are surrounded and comforted by your loved ones in God’s Holy Place
I gaze at your smiling image in my mirror with your glowing, beautiful face.

Amazing angel choirs serenade you with the promise of joy and peace
And at last you now are truly healed with comforting ease.

I love you and miss you every day
I know you are justly happy in spiritual ways.

We loyally shared life since birth through the corridors of time
Merry Christmas, Little Sis...we are the ties that bind.

Nita Kaye Adams
Nichols Hills, OK
MOTHER

The things that I can best recall
From those days when I was small
Are Mother’s hands, how gentle they
Would caress me at work or play;
And oh, how healing was their touch
When bruised and bumped I’d suffer much
Until softly cradled in her arms
My hurt succumbed from her alarm.
The fondest memories I recall
Are Mother’s hands, when I was small.

Kit Ahlers
Oklahoma City, OK

In Butterfly Time

In the brevity of seasons
they flutter and frolic about
like carefree children at play.

Images in dazzling orange catch
my eye as they dart from lilies to lilacs,
sipping up the sweet nectar of life.

Seemingly, they give little
thought to measured time
by One so divinely planned.

With captivating presence
they stir a sense of serenity,
even as winter’s chill impends.

To high Sierras they must
fly and cling to precious life,
soon to be given for another.

I would be like a soft-winged
butterfly— soaring serenely in
the warmth and brevity of life.

Karen Kay Knauss Bailey
Blanchard, OK
ITVE BEEN INSPIRED IN MANY WAYS
THROUGH THE YEARS AND ALL THE DAYS.
MY PARENTS TAUGHT ME WRONG FROM RIGHT
AND CALMED MY FEARS EACH STORMY NIGHT.

MY FOLKS NOT ONLY TALKED THE TALK,
THEIR LIFE SHOWED THEY WALKED THE WALK.
I NEVER SMOKED OR DRANK. YOU SEE.
I DIDN’T WANT THEM ASHAMED OF ME.

DOCTORS THOUGHT I’D DIE AT EIGHTY SIX
FOR MY PROBLEMS THEY COULD NOT FIX.
DAUGHTER SAID "MY MOM WILL LIVE".
SHE HAD SO MUCH FAITH TO GIVE.

THE FAMILY GATHERED ’ROUND TO PRAY,
EACH IN THEIR OWN UNIQUE WAY
ANSWERS TO PRAYERS GOD DID GIVE.
NINE MONTHS LATER, I STILL LIVE.

I SEE GOD’S WONDROUS WORKS OF ART.
BEAUTIFUL SUNSETS STIR MY HEART.
BIRDS ARE SINGING IN THE TREES,
WHILE WIND DANCES THROUGH THE LEAVES.

BOBWHITE CALLING TO ITS MATE,
THAT’S SAFELY HIDDEN NEAR THE GATE
A V OF GEESE IS SOUTHWARD WINGING,
MY HAPPY HEART JUST GOES ON SINGING.

INSPIRATION! WHAT CAN IT BE?
MOSTLY FAITH, IT SEEMS TO ME.
WE’RE NOT A LOUD AND NOISY CREW,
BUT OUR FAITH RUNS DEEP AND TRUE.

INSPIRATION

Imogene Barger
Hinton, OK
ON COUNTRY ROAD

No stop lights or signs
Only the lamps of a starry sky
Shining at night, faithful, like a mother's love
Freedom to breathe and free to walk
On red rimmed earth called pleasure’s stage

Comes dawn with showcase of endless parade
Processions of ants in solemn march
A lone coyote stalking for prey
Alerting the unsuspect with radar beams

A blue jay jumps, screaming limb to limb
Wanting to be king while he holds domain
Fields carpeted with clover
Stealing the senses drunk with fragrance

Wild flowers arrayed in rainbow hue
Harmonizing refrain in nature’s symphonic song
The show is free - costs nothing at all
If you take a walk
   On country road.

Blanche Barrymore
Oklahoma City, OK
I Have a Scar That Does Not Show

To see my face
You would not know
I have a scar
That does not show

From a blow so hard
I fell to the ground
The day my world
Stopped turning around

How do I survive
I screamed and cried
I cannot go on
My child has died!

Yet, survive I have
I was given no choice
I was drowning in grief
When I heard a voice

Call out to me
Come take our hands
We will guide you through
This foreign land

Guide me they did
And now I know
They also have scars
That do not show

Merry B. Bennett-Schaapveld
Elgin, OK
The Beat Between Past and Future

Beverly lives in the moment.
Her world is only this moment,
That breath between what was and what will be.

Her focus is only now.

Not then,
nor when,
now.

Experts say her disease is one of disappearing.

Yet, she is here right now.

There are flashes of yesteryear;
The abusive father who hurt her mother,
er her threats to kill him if he hit her again.

Like a candle being snuffed
she returns to this moment
and asks, “Where's my dog?”

Her constant companion,
her protector,
her supporter,
her friend
sleeps nearby.

Beverly lives in this moment,
that beat between past and future.

She is aware of neither.

It is enough.

Susan Bishop
Edmond, OK
Patrick

I always thought you would be here, Patrick
Singing your Irish songs
We were your friends, making a racket
Proud to be singing along
The angels came and took you
I can't believe you're gone
I always thought you would be here, Patrick
Singing your Irish songs.

I always thought I could hear you playing
Your great twelve-string guitar
To play with you the fiddlers and
The banjos came from far.
Betsy McQuire the elf herself
Would dance right through the bar
I always thought I could hear you, Patrick
Playing your great guitar.

The whole pub loved your ballads, Patrick
The Irish tales of old
Rebels and robbers, lovers and lust
Pirate ships and gold
You carried us off to Ireland
With the stories that you told
The whole pub loved your ballads, Patrick
The Irish tales of old.
I always thought you would greet me, Patrick
With your great big grin.
I'd walk in here alone and know
In you I had a friend.
Now I must wait till Heaven's gate
To see you smile again.
But there I know you will greet me, Patrick
With your great big grin.

Teresa Black Bradway
Clayton, OK
In Memory of Annie Carter Guy

My Grandma Wore Moccasins

i remember my grandmother
on
hot summer days in western Oklahoma
wearing a long cotton dress
with long sleeves
a black scarf wrapped around her head
moccasins on her feet
working in her garden
hoeing out the weeds
watering plants
she grew onions, tomatoes, radishes
potatoes, squash, and much more
during those long, hot sunny afternoons
we would raid her garden
when it began to ripen
biscuits in hand
made onion sandwiches
tomato sandwiches
radish sandwiches
we always brought plenty of salt
my grandma was a hard working woman
she couldn't speak English and never read a book
but
she nursed many people back to health
with no fear of catching their diseases
she could sew the latest styles
my mom said she could look at a dress in the store
and
copy that exact style
for my mom and her sisters
she canned veggies
made jam from wild plums
and
made quilts
moccasins
beaded purses and shawls
molasses cookies
her breakfasts were my favorite
pork chops, big biscuits, gravy, and potatoes
coffee
loaded with sugar and cream
we drank from bowls
she chewed tobacco
which was good medicine
for
ant bites, wasps and other insects
we often ran into during the day
we used a lot of sign language
around my grandma
so we would know what she wanted us to do
my two sisters and I stayed with her every summer
before we became teenagers
  every morning
  after breakfast
  on the front porch
she braided our hair
even though I informed her
every morning
that I had curly hair
she made me a quilt for my graduation
and a beaded purse
she never said in English that she
  loved me
but she showed it in a million
different ways
she was a good grandma
even if she wore moccasins and only spoke her native language

Dr. Guyneth Bedoka Cardwell
Fort Cobb, OK
ODE TO MY LAST GRANDCHILD

As I watch my last grandchild drive off to college
Hopefully to gain a head full of knowledge,
There's a tear in my eye but pride in my soul
As he begins this journey toward his goals,
I offer thanks for this young man, with hair so red
He has faced challenges but shown no dread
Obstacles there have been, but bravely he stood
With a smile beautiful and his heart so good
My prayers with you go, my fine young man
As you travel toward your dreams and plans

But please remember dear Granny's sage advice
(although crude and perhaps not very nice)
It comes from many years of life's wisdom gleaned
Get plenty of sleep and keep your underwear clean!

Barbara Carter
Ft. Towson, OK

I BELIEVE

I BELIEVE...
AGE IS ONLY A NUMBER
AND NOT WHAT YOU SEE.
IT DOES NOT REVEAL THE IMAGE
OF WHO I CAN BE.

Karen S. Conley
McAlester, OK
The Rose

I left it all, and I went away
To find something I never had -
A place of my own where I wouldn't be
A burden on Mother and Dad.

I worked real hard and the good Lord blest
My grateful heart through and through;
But I never forgot the old home place
And the porch where the roses grew.

In the summer the field was lush and green
And the garden was plentiful too,
But the winters were hard when the snow piled high
And we kids had to get to school.

We hardly could wait till the mockingbird sang
And the wild flowers pushed up their heads;
Till the falling rain by the side of the porch -
Woke the rose from it's sleeping bed.

In the living room we had a big old barrel -
That made us a dandy fire.
On cold nights we sat with the popcorn pan
Playin' banjo and fiddle and lyre.

Oh, we laughed a lot, but we cried some too -
It was hard times in thirty two...
But we made our way and developed a faith
That was certain to see us through.

Every season that came we watched that rose,
Blessed by it's fragrance and grace -
All of us knew that deep in our hearts
The rose had a special place.

For a rose can remind you of love so deep -
Even pressed the scent lingers on -
And from little on we were taught to compare
Our lives to the Rose of Sharon.

We all grew up - in spite of the times -
Made our way in a world of fast pace.
As the years rolled by I decided I'd go
Back to the old home place.
....The house now was gone...the barn and rail fence....
   No wonder - they never were much -
   But my heart skipped a beat - I couldn't believe!
   I had to walk over and touch!

For the rose still survived and had grown through the years;
   Tiny rose that had so pleased us,
   Was a beautiful bush as big as the house -
   Still living - still green and lush.

   Then the memories came - echoes of time
   The floor where your penny fell through;
   The old water well, the bucket and cup...
   Forty acres by hand and mule.

The eggs Mom would set and the way she would fret
   'Bout the holes in our shoes and clothes;
   And the table filled with her homemade skills
   And a vase with blooms from the rose.

   The rose! - oh, the rose! so magnificent now!
   It's fragrance and beauty so rare!
   I knew that the Lord had nurtured that rose
   With His blessings and personal care.

To remind us one day when we'd all gone our ways
   That each still holds in his heart
   Mem 'ries of a place where happiness dwelt
   And helped us all make a right start.

   I gathered a bloom and a good strong shoot
   From the bush and I took it home...
   I planted the shoot...by the side of my porch..
   For the sake of mem 'ry alone.

   Joan Clifton Costner
   Guymon, OK
The Gathering

Our land has been what it is; open and full of the new.
It has struggled and flown with the wind under the skies so blue.
We came from afar, oh, so afar to put our roots in its ground;
Believing with our hearts and our minds that in generosity we abound.
The silence of our voices has blinded our visions once held;
But, the cries of our ancestors have dug deep the promise… ‘all’s well.’
If tomorrow rises from the East and our grasp on reality abides;
We shall gather, all gather, and pay homage to those who have lived and have died.
It will be a bright day; the one yet to come; our gathering shall shout forth with delight;
Hooray for our country, for our dreams. They have not died in the night.
Come forth all you who believe that America can be might with right!
This land where all are welcome and can share the roof of God’s love –
Will be found full of new, again, gathering under the wings of Peace’ dove.

Mary Frances Cox
Duncan, OK

Be Still and Listen

Be still and listen
To things all around
that usually are there
But can’t hear their sound

Be still and listen
To that whistling wind
that howls in the night
And that tree branch or twig
that hits on the window in its downward plight

Be still and listen to creaking
and moaning
Of a floor beneath your feet
Or the automatic cycle of the furnace
As it turns on the heat
Listen to the hummingbird
    As it flutters its wings in flight
And the early morning rooster
    Welcoming the daylight!

Whatever you do, just listen
    Be still and rejoice
Because you have just listened
    To God’s Precious Voice

Be still and listen
    To a neighbor’s pounding nail
Or someone in a distance
    On their boat through water sail

Be still and listen
    To the continuous silence, you see
Isn’t it amazing
    What you hear without
Radio or TV?

Be still and listen
    To a car coming down the road
    Or take a listen to a babbling brook
It is quite surprising what sounds
    surround us
If we just pause and take a look

Because this is a part of God’s creation
    This is our earthly home
He took time to plan for us and
    Have prepared this place for us to roam.

    If we just listen!

Renee Davis
Grove, OK
My Christmas Joy
(UNEXPECTED)

When homebound from the snow and ice –

I saw a child, decked in Red coat – looked nice!

She built a snowman while playing in the snow.

What a treat it was for me to see – Ooh!!

Betty I. Enox,
Norman, OK

Inspired Living

Inspired living may be too late
St. Peter may be at the Golden gate…
Find a way to stay alive —
Even if it means to jive
Never too old to even giggle
Find the exercise wiggle

Don’t even have to stand
Sit on the bed, it’s planned
Press at the top of each leg
Move like you are rolling a keg
Swing like you’re in a race
Keeping a healthy pace

Slide hands down the leg to the floor
Twist, swing each shoulder and more
Roll your head, then up and down
Energy lost, energy found
This is fun, this energy wiggle
Get the rhythm and the giggle

To bring joy to yourself and others
Love, kindness and encouragement for all brothers
Inspired living means hanging in there
Never, ever forgetting to care
For plants, animals, and people
Remember God and the Steeple

Jo Ann Gordon, Norman, OK
WAR WIFE

While he was in the Air Force
somewhere in Germany or France
she, too, was doing her part
for the defense effort.

Like other "Rosie Riveters"
of World War II, she worked
in an airplane factory.
Because the long nights without him
Were the hardest, she did not mind
working the late shift.
It helped fill the empty hours
of that lonely time.

It was difficult being apart--
they had been married barely a year.
She kept him in her heart,
Never really out of her thoughts;
and every time she opened her tool box
her fellow workers could see
the other half of her heart.

From a photo glued inside the lid
he smiled back at her,
with promise for the future.
And every time she looked into his eyes
She was strengthened with the knowledge
that "someday" was one day closer.

Dena R. Gorrell
Edmond, OK
What a Night

What a night
What a day
To let me say
I love you

Just because
you are you
a grumpy man
somewhat a ham

Love is made
of things like that
a hug a smile
a full-blown spat

You are you
as I said before
with all smirks,
you have lots of quirks

And oh yes
I must confess
I love you
I love you

LaVonne Halliburton
McAlester, Oklahoma
STILL LIVING LARGE

Once I ran
and felt the wind race with me.
Once I waltzed with lovers
melting midnight hours.
Once I wore a wedding gown,
with flowers in my hair
and laughter lived with us.
Once my arms were cradles;
All my songs were lullabies.

Now the ice of time has
frozen me to this familiar chair.
But through the window's pane
my mind is racing with the falling leaves.
I know the feel of wind that tussles hair.
The music swells;
I close my eyes
to waltz again with memories.

And when the sun is down,
one who heard my lullabies
will come with strength
to help me down the stairs.

Betty C. Hatcher
Oklahoma City, OK
Kristopher Socks –
My Angel With Fur

The hum of his purring
His unconditional love
The warmth of his fluffy coat
With the smell of outdoors
The touch of his whiskers
Even his hair tickling my nose
The happy swish of his tail
Saying I love you.
His cuddliness to comfort me
Nothing could replace my
Kristopher Socks Kitty Cat –
My angel with fur.

Sylvia Jones
Oklahoma City, OK

The Indian Bean Tree

“You will look so young with this makeover
No clerk would offer you a Senior Citizen Discount,”
Says the TV show-person today.

It’s a cold, January morning
Sitting by my large window
I sip coffee, gazing at backyard trees
All their limbs at display
Shivering at the wind.

The only hissing sound
Is the whistle of the wind
Like a charioteer
Whipping the branches
Hard
Swaying them around
On and on....
The bare Indian bean tree is a sight!
Middle-aged, vigorous, magnificent, abundant branches
Healthful trunk,
Gives life in spring
To countless branches
Bearing countless leaves big and small.

This cold winter morning
The Indian bean tree
Stands against the howling of the wind
The coldest of the cold!

No science can impregnate it with leaves
Not art can make it bloom sooner than its time
Not earth can warm it underneath….
Standing firm, shakes vehemently in the wind!

We seniors are this Indian bean tree!
Strength is our blood
Time is our soul.
Magnificent, resilient, hearty
Whole
Made such with years' lessons: separations
Losses, grieves, hopes,
Laughter, expectations, tears, sobs, and joy.

We are who we are!
Why mask such sophistication?
Such maturity?
Wear pretension
Hide our essence which nature lovingly bestowed?

Let's confidently go
Ask
For our SENIOR CITIZEN DISCOUNTS
At all facilities, restaurants, and retail shops.
Let's proudly wear our paling skins
Our sliver hair
Our infirmities as they come along.
Arthritis, back pain, osteoporosis
Fainting memory, wrinkling skin, graying hair
We earned as we went.
These our trophies
Each a precious stone on our crown.

Our soul,
This invaluable rock, we wear within.
Mountain-like it stands robust
To shield us from all within and without.
This is our CROWN…!

Our CROWN, gem of experiences bitter and sweet
Ripe with diamonds, emeralds and gold
Should we wear with pride,
To take part in life…

We are the CROWNED SISTERS, WIVES, MOTHERS, GRANDMOTHERS of our time
On the chariots of decades gone by
Painstakingly, diligently rode
Surmounted all the bents in the road
Took the thorns with the rose
And survived.

We bravely, competently reached thus far…!
Let’s keep on riding with dignity and joy
To showcase not only the pebbles
But the diamonds, emeralds, and gold!

Zahra Karimipour
Edmond, OK
OKLAHOMA ROAD

There are fields on my left and fields on my right
and in between the road, four lanes wide.
One and on and on it goes…
Where does it end? Nobody knows.

And on top of the hill
you see the road still –
For miles and miles and miles and miles,
Whether you’re worried or full of smiles.

An endless ribbon as far as you can see,
Just there to drive on for you and for me.

How many cars have traveled this road?
How many semis have hauled their load?
How many trailers and tractors and trucks
Were on this road when there were only rocks?

How many kids had been driven to school?
How many mothers had lost their cool?
How many fathers had had a wreck?
How many hopefuls had left and came back?

How many traveled this road in their prime?
how many used it for their very last time?
An entire history of family life
was made on this road and taken in strife.

The road kees on going. It doesn’t care.
And the cars keep a-coming, but you better beware
And watch your speed and play it safe,
and leave the scenery for others to rave.

Eve Leach
Duncan, OK
Bird Watching

Wanna get happy each day?  
Take time to pray to be able to see a bird at "play".  
They whistle and fly through the sky at the "blink of an eye"  
Ever watch a bird build a nest?  
It takes them hours to do their best!!  
As they place one twig at a time on a branch of a tree, it sure does "amaze me"!!  
Sometimes their nests will fall apart,  
Giving them the need to make a fresh and new start!!  
Occasionally I will be lucky enough to see a bird simply staring at me.  
When this happens I melt beside the tree.  
Try going outside and just "whistle a tune" and you will receive an answer soon  
Of a bird nearby hoping you will give it another try to see if he can do the same as you!!  
My last bird's name was "Little Willie" who enjoyed being silly.  
You could count on him saying "Hello" when the telephone would ring  
And whistling a tune when I would sing!!

Linda Leigh Lee  
Edmond, OK

There is time to...

I’ve lived 67 years and have never  
    had straight teeth  
    won a sweepstakes  
    been able to pick out a good watermelon  
    gotten 36 miles to the gallon  
In 67 years I’ve been to  
    the A&P  
    Aunt Eulan’s  
    the company picnic  
And been late

But I’ve never been to  
    Australia  
    the moon  
    New York to watch the ball drop on New Year’s Eve  
    Carol Burnett’s house  
Or been thin
I am old(er) but…
There is time to taste
  bitter
  sweet
  sour
  hot
  cold
There is time to…
  climb a mountain
  lie in a valley in the rain
  walk the dogs at dawn
  play the harp
  catch a fish
  write a poem
  a novel
  a play
  have brownies for breakfast

I want to
  sing on stage at the Grand Ole Opry
  cook a pancake without it sticking to the pan
  teach my dog to catch a frisbie
  see the birthing of a calf
  be a preacher
    a writer
    a photographer
And I want to carve a bird out of balsa wood
I will, then, for all eternal time, only be older
Not old
There is time to…
  prevent a day, a year, a lifetime colored gray
  the regret of silence
  escape the vacuum of an empty mind
    a lazy, dusty body

There is time to…
  Find a passion and purpose that will
    get me up every morning
    allow me to sleep every night

Gotta go…

Pamela Sue Backhaus Leptich
Grove, OK
CLOUDS

Cotton candy in the sky
Softly spun way up high
Nestled in a sky of blue
There for God and the angels, too.

Cotton candy in the sky
Heavenly delights way up high
Inspiring memories for us to see
Of yummy treats for you and me.

Cotton candy in the sky
Childhood reminiscence way up high
Of happy times so long ago
Our youthful joys never to forgo.

Clouds are our cotton candy in the sky!

Margaret A. Little
Grove, OK

Sweet Style of Shir-Lee

Born in Oklahoma, some say the sticks,
farm couple plunged deep into politics.
Henry and Shirley, in church they were wed,
close to the farms where they were born and bred.

He chose the high road, governor of the state.
She was beside him whatever his fate.
She designed dresses, the styles of Shir-Lee
and managed her Main Street Doll Factory.

Oklahoma's pride on a world-wide stage,
she gave inspiration to every age.
The banner for State Beauty she unfurled:
anti-drug, anti-trash, a better world.

Shirley ran a cafe, served the best steaks
where coffee drinkers met, ate pies she baked.
She was a people person, friend to all.
and took their problems to heart, big or small.

Shopping with daughters, a beautiful day,
but Shirley's trip never ended that way.
Life walked out on her; death came through the door.
Sweet Shirley Bellman is with us no more.

Vera Long, Stillwater, OK
I HAVE NOT LIVED LONG ENOUGH

I have lived to remember the loving adoration of my beautiful parents and can recall many beautiful moments we had together.

I have lived long enough to experience the pain caused by their separation and my mother's schizophrenia and all that entails.

I have lived to remember the wonderful and great lives of my grandparents and sacrifices of love they gave to me as well as the grief caused by their departure from this life.

I have lived to love and lived long enough to suffer the loss of that love more than once. I have seen the ugliness of Alzheimer's on the face of precious loved ones, the death of a grandchild, the deaths of many dear friends and family I loved dearly.

I have lived long enough to enjoy the ups and downs of work, volunteering, blended families, adoption, foster care, live birth, grandchildren, and nursing homes.

I have lived long enough to write books about my memories but also long enough to know that amount of writing is not required to paint my life's picture.

I have lived through many dark depressions some so severe that I thought it would be better if I had never been born, but I have lived long enough to survive and come into the light many times and have come to the realization that time is swift and I have not lived long enough.

I have not lived long enough for there are still songs to sing and write, pictures to paint, poems and books to pen, family and friends to visit, causes to right and so little time left.

There are sunrises and sunsets I haven't yet seen, mountains and rivers that call to my soul. There are places I still need to visit and souls to help make whole.

What a "Wonderful Life" I have lived. But I'm not finished living I still have more to give.

Linda Lutter
Stillwater, OK
From the Porch

Early in the morning the sky is dark blue. Sometimes stars shine through. The street lamp and the porch light pretend to be in competition as they light the yard. The eastern sky grows lighter and pink clouds are showing. The street lamp and the porch light give up. The little pink clouds turn gold, the day has begun. In spring, daffodils turn the whole world gold. The roses begin to bloom. Seed catalogs arrive in the mail. The grass grows green and there are little birds in the elm tree. The mornings are warmer now, I can put away the heavy coat and the blanket. As spring gives way to summer, the sky grows brassy in color; we look in vain for clouds. The little birds have flown. Suddenly it is fall. Trees lose their leaves. The western sky glows red and gold. The daylight fades, and the lights come on again. The sky is darker, and I need my coat again. Day settles in the west. Another day has ended.

Elizabeth Metcalf
McAlester, OK

THOUGHTS ABOUT AN INSPIRING LIFE

As I look out my bedroom window each morn,
I am mesmerized by the rolling hills of autumn glory or the blazing beauty of spring foliage.
I SMILE and THANK THE LORD for the JOY of such generous gifts. I possess gifts of CONFIDENCE, JOY, OPTIMISM, CURIOSITY, and CREATIVITY. I am a HAPPY and CHEERFUL girl.

Life is a JOURNEY that is bigger than imagined. When making a decision, I go with the feelings in my heart, not in my head. As time passes, I feel more self-assured with my choices and decisions. Yes, the time feels right for me and my adventures. CONFIDENCE, JOY, OPTIMISM, CURIOSITY, and CREATIVITY expands my daily activities. I am a HAPPY and CHEERFUL girl.

I chose a life of ADVENTURE at a very early age. I search for a new adventure everywhere. I feel its presence in my life; its drive, and that it is flourishing in my soul daily. I am continually challenged by ideas, events, and exploration. When I know what I am going to do, I feel a growing spark of joy, energy, and hope that generates from the top of my head to bottom of my toes. Often it seems my ADVENTURES have aspects that seem to have been shaped by the CURIOSITY of a young child. As I accomplish my goals, my self-confidence strengthens, but: my energy levels are depleted. In order to keep my batteries charged, I must repeatedly stop and take down time including alone time. As a day ends, I continue to be guided by my attitudes of CONFIDENCE, JOY, OPTIMISM, CURIOSITY, and CREATIVITY, and HOPE with lots of giggles. I am a happy and cheerful pre-teen girl.
CREATIVITY must be a pivotal point in my life. I am inspired by everything around me. I have many ideas for projects, more than I need. Building a quilt or an art piece from minute pieces of fabric is astounding. In creating a project, I often have to use my PROBLEM-SOLVING skills in order to overcome hurdles in both my project and my life. My joy stems from a glowing, expanding, and an enchanting, warm, cuddly, feeling sparked by my God given gifts of CONFIDENCE, JOY, OPTIMISM, CURIOSITY, CREATIVITY and HOPE filled with lots of giggles. I am a happy and cheerful teenager.

Repeatedly, I enroll in classes, not only to improve my skills but, to make new friends. Friends rejuvenate my spirits. Making new friends and keeping old friends is hard work, just as important as it was years ago. Being with or thinking about friends, gives me a warm and cuddling feeling of safety and love. Without CREATIVITY in my life, I lose my spark. My JOY stems from God's gifts of CONFIDENCE, JOY, OPTIMISM, CURIOSITY, CREATIVITY, HOPE and HUMOR with lots of giggles. I keep my focus on WHAT I WANT and am aware of unexpected and miraculous situations. I am happy and cheerful. I am a young adult.

Life is not always sweet. Not every day goes the way we or others plan. Life becomes what I call an uphill day with rocks, and sometimes boulders to overcome. These events can hinder your spirits and alter your actions. Occasionally, some days are very crucial and painful for both ourselves and others. Prayers, treasured friends, support from the church, and trust in God can help one handle any situation that may arise. A family member, a friend, and I have all experienced these situations. A kind word, a caring act, on-going support, and an amazing smile helps one get through these events. Keeping my mind and spirits high, I once again must use my gifts of CONFIDENCE, JOY, OPTIMISM, CURIOSITY, CREATIVITY, HOPE, and HUMOR with lots of giggles. I use my problem-solving skills to seek, find, and sometimes accept what is happening. I am happy and cheerful. I am a CHRISTIAN WOMAN.

Throughout my life, I talk to GOD throughout the day. I thank HIM for my granted skills and abilities. I ask him for help for the sick, to assist a person looking for a job, and for those in need, my friends, family, and my husband. I practice gentle acts of kindness almost daily. I thank Him for new skills, new adventures, and my new friends. I am FULL OF THANKFULNESS to the Lord for everything. I remain full of CONFIDENCE, JOY, OPTIMISIM, CURIOSITY, CREATIVITY, HOPE, and HUMOR with lots of giggles

These attitudes, my experiences, my love for the LORD, and the people I have meet have influenced and INSPIRED how I HAVE LIVED my life. I truly can say I have LIVED A FULL LIFE, an INSPIRED LIFE through every interaction with everyone I have met, and everything I did. My life has still been guided by GOD, LOVE, and my gifts of CONFIDENCE, JOY, OPTIMISIM, CURIOSITY, CREATIVITY, HOPE, and HUMOR, with lots of giggles. I am happy and cheerful. I am now an AGING CHRISTIAN WOMAN who is mightily blessed.

Sharon Mikkelson, Poteau, OK
My Dad

An old fashioned preacher
Was my Dad.
When he spoke the rafters shook
And when he raised the Good Book
in his right hand
He became God's chosen teacher.

His first calling had been singing
And when he sang
That high tenor voice ringing
Amazing Grace, My Hope is built,
Precious Lord, Hold my hand
   Echoed through every corner of the building.

He sang at camp meetings
Revivals, brush arbors
Apart of-the team, carrying the greetings
Of the Love of God, the plan of salvation
Helping the poor.
All this leading to his destination.

When his calling to preach came
It was a fearful thing
So he studied and wrote and continued to sing
and soon there emerged a teacher, a preacher
A spiritual being
Who could reach out to people, in Jesus name.

He quoted the scripture, he recited a song
Which he knew by heart
We pointed his finger, he shouted and roared
He pleaded, he wept, our spirits would soar
To the throne of God
And when God's love was offered, peop1e would come.

He -has been gone now for many a year
To his heavenly home
But sometimes, quite unexpectedly, I hear
A- sweet tenor voice, a familiar refrain
A sermon of hell-fire and damnation
And I miss him, my Dad, the old fashioned preacher.

Laverne Mobley
Crescent, OK
Fly Away

Let's fly away
On a blue blue
Clear day
Up in the heavens
Skywards skywards
On blue blue day
Let's fly away

Dorothy Myers
Bethany, OK

Light in the Tunnel

The doctor called his fellows
To peer into my eyes,
“This is rare! Come and see –
Her corneas the norm defies!”

I endured lasers, scrapes and huge contacts,
Surgeries, lights and drops that itch,
Transplants in both my eyes
And cautious take-out of each stitch.

Through it all I am amazed
At the blessings I can see;
Time for prayer and meditation
In God’s world made just form me.

There are sunsets and flowers,
A blur of stars at night;
The quiet chirp of crickets –
God holds me in His Light.

Verla Nash
Foster, OK
The Legend of White Buffalo

On the plains of Oklahoma lives a pure White Buffalo.  
His kingdom is the prairie, where the wild tornados blow.

    People sing the story of the Great White Buffalo;  
    White Buffalo, White Buffalo.  
    People sing the story of the Great White Buffalo.

Before the fences came along, a maiden and her brave  
Were lost within a winter storm; they could not be saved.

Their fallen horse lay dying. They sang a farewell song  
Then a Great White Buffalo appeared and led them safely home.

When the storm was over, his tracks could not be seen  
People said the lovers had been rescued by a dream.

    White Buffalo, White Buffalo.  
    People sing the story of the Great White Buffalo.

And then a little child was lost, one stormy April night  
A twister blasted down the plains and no help was in sight.

Through hail and rain, the baby saw a great white buffalo  
It carried him to refuge in a cave he didn't know.

When the searchers came next morning, they found him sleeping so  
And in his hand were bits of fur from a great white buffalo.

    White Buffalo, White Buffalo.  
    People sing the story of the Great White Buffalo.

If your heart is brave and pure and the Great Spirit wills it so,  
One day you may get to see the Great White Buffalo.

    White Buffalo, White Buffalo.  
    People sing the legend of the Great White Buffalo.

On the plains of Oklahoma lives a pure White Buffalo.  
His kingdom is the prairie, where the wild tornados blow.  
Only the bravest of the brave will ever see him go  
But the People sing this story of the Great White Buffalo.  
    White Buffalo, White Buffalo.  
The People sing this story of the Great White Buffalo.

D.K. Oklahoma  
Edmond, OK
Unloved and Unwanted

It's his 6th birthday.
He crawls out of bed.
Only food in the kitchen's
A slice of stale bread.
He opens the door
And trudges away.
The free lunch at school's
His big meal for the day.
If he is late getting home
Nobody will care.
He wanders through the house.
There is no one else there.
Where the belt buckle hit
There are scars on his back.
His mother's a drunk and
His dad's high on crack.
His brother's in prison.
He'll be there a long while,
And nobody cares for
A throw-away child.

E. Louise Osburn
Homeny, OK
TORNADO

Debris is scattered all over the lawn
The house that once stood there now is gone
Life as you know it is over and through
You have no idea what you should do
The anger has been replaced with tears
With thoughts and memories of past years
You never dreamed that it would happen to you
All those years in Oklahoma and it never came through
When the siren sounded it was just like before
Take the kids and pets and get under the floor
The basement had always been there, true
Protecting us as the storms went through
So why must it take such a toll
On life and homes and trees and souls
The dreams of the future in this place
Have been replaced with tears and empty space
You look around and see that you
Are not the only one, but one of the few
With hollow eyes and tears on your cheeks
You will wonder and wander for weeks
What will we do, where will you turn
No place to sleep, you stew and yearn
Reality hits and you understand
This was only a house, not a promised land
Any house can become a home
If you live there and make it your own
Clean up, rebuild, and start anew
And remember, you’re an Okie…you’ll make it through.

Sue Pope
Pawnee, OK
Inspired Living

What inspires me to live
Is God in his heaven above
He inspires me to love and give
And tell everyone of his abundant love.

As I look back over the years
And all the blessings I’ve had
I thank God for his comfort through all my tears
My fears, and sorrows that make me so sad.

I have lost many a loved one
From this old world they’ve flown.
One by one God has called them
To live with him in their heavenly home.

For God has inspired my living
Through many, many a year
He blesses me over and over
And I know he’s always near.

I’m inspired to go on living
Till God shall call me home
I’ll leave this old world believing
That I have not walked my life alone.

Shirley Rains
Duncan, OK
Ode To A Good Dog

So; we walk; he and I.
And, I talk.
About Charles . . .
And, how much we miss him.
His answer is to lift his nose and sniff the wind.
He tugs me along,
Making me pay attention
To the path and all around me.
He; naturally, stopping off at every tree.
Of course, he has no answers.
Because there are none.
As to why this senseless war had the nerve to take my son.
His master - - his pal - - the runner he used to know.
But; somehow I know that he knows.
He knows I'll just walk . . .
And talk and talk and talk.
Good dog. He just listens . . . and bids me keep walking.

Deborah K. Sharpton
Pauls Valley, OK

THE BLESSING BOTTLE

Once we dreamed of bottles found afloat
On the 'High Seas' containing a 'note'!
But this 'Bottle' comes with 'note attached'
Carrying words of wisdom seldom matched!
Now bottles purchased and the liquid therein
May bring temporary solace or perhaps lead to sin?
But bottles, just like people, can have a change of heart!
This is now your BLESSING BOTTLE
So let the flow of Blessings start!
Drop in a note of Thankfulness,
Perhaps a Prayer Request or two,
A worry you've turned to the lord,
The name of one whose Love blessed you!
May you feel release from tension,
Pent up anger, strife and pain
As your BLESSING BOTTLE fills
It's Peace, Joy and Love you gain!
Then, may you sense a Sweet New Spirit
Richly outpoured o'er all your days
As your cup continually overflows
With Prayers, Blessings and to God 'Great Praise'!

Marolyn Stout, Oklahoma City, OK
FOR ALL MY FAMILY I MUST SAY "WAY TO GO."
HOW DID YOU KEEP IT A SECRET FOR MY BIG 8 O?

I WAS GETTING READY FOR HOW OLD I'D BE,
BUT ALL OF YOU MADE IT A GREAT DAY AND JUST FOR ME.

THAT MORNING I LOOKED IN THE MIRROR AND SAW THIS OLD LADY,
AND SURE ENOUGH SHE SURELY DID LOOK EIGHTY.

READING CARDS, NOTES AND POEMS; I FELT LOTS OF LOVE,
FOR ALL MY FAMILY I THANK OUR GOD ABOVE.

FOR A WHOLE MONTH I FORGOT ABOUT ACHES AND SUCH I HAD,
I GUESS ALL THE SURPRISES I HAD, KEPT ME FROM BEING SAD.

I THANK GOD FOR MY GREAT LIFE AND A CLOSE FAMILY,
AND FOR THE LOVE THEY SHOWED ESPECIALLY FOR ME.

JUDY WASN'T SATISFIED FOR ALL THAT SHE DID,
SHE SENT PICTURES FOR ALL THE SENIORS TO SEE – WHEN I WAS A KID.

OH WELL, I'LL JUST KEEP ON KEEPING ON IN THE SAME OLD WAY,
AND SAY WHY WAS I WORRIED – IT WAS JUST ANOTHER DAY.

Jean Tipps
McAlester, OK
THANKS-GIVINGS

As we grow older we should count our blessings. But instead we sometimes count our mess-ings. Many things we can't do as we did before. Our memory is not what it used to be anymore. We see people we know but can't remember their name. Our eye sight and our hearing is not the same.

Today look on the bright side of your life. Make a list of the things that cause you strife; Then make a list of the things that make you thankful and glad. You will probably find that things are not so bad. Thank God each day for taking care of you; then counting your blessings you will do.

LaWanda Nell Vaughn, Pauls Valley, OK

GOD MADE YOU SPECIAL

There's not a single person In the world today, Who looks and acts exactly Like what you do and say.

God gave each one of us a talent. Some are great and some are small But each one is important In this world we need them all.

One of the smallest parts of the body But one of the most important too Is our eyes. What would we do without them? I don't know what we would do.
And like our eyes, you are important.
Though your talent may be small
You are here on this earth for a purpose.
And God loves us all.

The smile you gave to someone
May have brightened up their day.
Your words of encouragement and prayer
Have helped someone along their way.

God has made you special.
So use the talent that He gave you.
Whether great or small -- you’re important.
And the talent He gave you is too.

Mary F. Walker, Edmond, OK

Lifting Our Gaze

I missed seeing a monarch today, focusing
instead on trash in a field.
Given a second chance to catch the winged burst of color
as it settled on a purple bloom, I vowed never
to miss another.

The beauty of nature unfolds before us each moment
we tear our eyes from the irritants, the mistakes,
the inconveniences of our lives.
How often we turn off the concertos of life to
hear the cacophony of sounds coming from
the complainers and critics, the self-appointed
wise men of the world's woes.

Just as a mockingbird must lift his face to the sky
to sing a glorious song, so must we turn our faces to the
small miracles of everyday awe and delight.
Those who concentrate on the evils, the wrongs, the
missteps will keep us drearly informed of all that
conspires to weigh our spirits down.

For today, I will lift my gaze above the minutiae of the
moment to focus on the horizon, taking in all the scenes,
looking for the seldom seen magnificence, beauty and joy.
My spirit can soar above man's broken pieces, if only
for a moment before it is grounded,
but I will carry forever the vision of the soaring spirit.

Lynn Wendelbo, Norman, OK
Men’s Division

(in alphabetical order by last name)
Hope for America

Here I am, an old and simple man,  
Stating an opinion as best I can.  
I’m sorry I have to say:  
“Sin is rampant in America today.”

Beware of where you tread a path.  
Bushes can hide a psychopath.  
There may be people you don’t suspect,  
Ready and willing to break your neck.

Blatantly, our political parties disagree,  
Bringing pain to innocent citizenry.  
Some politicians love to wrangle,  
Those kinds I’d like to strangle!

If there be governmental changes we desire,  
We must hold legislators’ feet to the fire.  
After all, we are their bosses,  
We’re not their jolly Santa Clauses!

America now rests in a perverted state,  
Because family values began to break,  
And our trust in God was forgotten,  
Resulting in a Nation that has gotten rotten!

We mustn’t become forlorn nor start a fuss,  
There’s a simpler solution that will work for us:  
Seek and praise God, practicing Christian ways;  
Then the future will bring much joy and brighter days.

Donald J. Banks  
Stillwater, OK
He is Not Here!

He is Not Here!
Hold back your tear,
And search the empty tomb.
No maggot there, or vermin share
The fruit of Mary’s womb.

He is Not Here!
No cross or bier,
No agony or pain,
Could stay the hand, or angel band,
That brought him home again!

He is Not Here!
How sweet and dear,
The victory of grace!
To overcome and free us from
This cold and dreadful place.

Jim Barthell
Duncan, OK
JUST A TEACHER

Before the winds of time come to blow me away
I've learned some lessons along life's way
So – what I've done and what I've been
May, matter to someone – in the end.
The teaching of values is not easy to do
Just remember, to thy self – always be true.
I hope my legacy speaks, long after I'm gone
And may the best of me somehow live on.
My friends seem to number now, only a few
Not long ago, I found one I consider new.
He's one special friend, I dearly esteem
Of what he might become, I can only dream
I've spent much time, teaching him to share
Through all of this, he's also learned to care
I've taught him about the "Golden Rule"
He learned all this, before he started to school
We like to work and play, and to share a joke
He knows I care, though it's not often spoke.
If any of my old values finally take shape
And from all those lessons he does not escape
I can only hope that in the future someday
He may reflect just one of those values taught by ole Jay

J.W. Brantley, Broken Bow, OK

Prayer Time

Lord I am so thankful that I care for you.
So thankful that I can thank of you and love you in the same way that you love me.
Lord I am so thankful for a wonderful wife that cares for me in the same way you care for me.
I am also glad we have a good place to go in the day time.
Glad that we can be among friends that care for us.
Elder care is a wonderful place for us to go to in the day time.
It is a place that they look after us and can teach us a few things.
It is good for us to have friends that care about us.
I'm thankful for our family they mean a lot to me.
But most of all Lord you care for us and that is what counts.
You lead us and guide us and prepare a way for us.
Lord just bless the group that we are about to start singing with.
Thanks Lord for this time.
Lord we ask that you would help us to have a good night sleep.
Love you Lord.

Bill Callahan, Tahlequah, OK
Where Have All The Old Soldiers Gone

Where have you gone?, you brave men of old.
Searching for something, perhaps your soul.
Have you laid down your heavy load?
As you stumble down life's long road.

Once you were young, happy and free.
But did the god of war lead you to see
All the pleasures of this world to view.
And cause you their vain ways to pursue

Did you wander from that path you had known?
When from your humble home, the god of war called to roam.
The path your pa and ma started you down.
The path that leads to that Heavenly crown

Youth has gone from you now.
You sit and wonder why and how.
You left that path so right and true
There is an answer for me and you

Come home to the Master, he's waiting for you still.
Walk that path, do His will.
He will greet you as His, once more.
Plant your feet on Heavens shore.

Answer the call from Heaven above.
Rejoice once again in His great love.
Walk again as in the days of your youth.
Abide forever in God's Heavenly truth.

John Cyphers
Edmond, OK
The Old Driller

There once was a driller who lived by a Lake
He had a nice family and many chances he would take
Not only with his money but his life as well
When you are a driller there are many things to quell
Just moving a rig to punch a hole
Everything is heavy especially when raising the pole
Something could bend and then it would break
Come crashing down have to run for his lifes sake
That did not happen however very often
If it did the old driller might be in a coffen
He could drill a well oft times very deep
To find that bubbling crude or natural gas to keep
His family eating well and clothes on their back
Maybe an extra car for his kids to track
Keep that bit on the bottom and turning to the right
He would tell his fellow workers who on occasions have to fight
As they had a different idea they wanted to show
But It was his rig, he was the boss to pay them the dough
As they would near the zone where the oil should have been
Sometime they would find salt water which would not spend
But most of the time it would work out for the good
He might get paid as this he should
The driller could pay his bills and even his banker
Although he was his friend he wanted the later
He would take his microscope and check the samples
Then run the electric logs to have an example
To run the casing and do the cementing
Perforate the zone and do the completing
Put the well on the pump or even if it flowed
The old driller was happy and all his family it showed
He would pay his respects to God from whom all things came
To let him keep working and to stay in the game.

Jim Davis
Checotah, OK
My Valentine

The first time I saw you
Was way, way back when
You was a shy little girl of 12
And I was only 13

Every time I saw you as the
Next few years went by.
No matter who was in the crowd
You would always catch my eye

The next few years we became
Good friends and let it go at that
We enjoyed each others company
And never had a spat

Then suddenly something happened
No one could fore see
You began to fail in health
The Dr. said TB

And I was called to fight
In the Korean War
Thinking of you back home
Made me realize what I was fighting for
We kept the postman busy
Writing letters back and forth
Then we got married
1953, December 24
God has been so very good to us
Supplying us with shelter and bread
He gave us 5 children to raise
Plus 2 He called on ahead

We raised the kids the best we could
Until they were grown
Now they have kids and Grand-kids
Of their own

They come and visit often and
We really enjoyed the times
And when they are gone
The house is quite, you are Still My Valentine

Harry Fitzgerald
Whitesboro, OK
I Watch TV Too

They're always tellin' how many folks
saw somethin' on TV.
But they never call me to find out
if I watched Andy Griffith or
the news last night.

I'd tell 'em
if they'd ask.
Sometimes I'm just flippin' around,
and there's Johnny Weissmuller
with a lion by the tail.

You better believe I watch that,
even though I know
it's curtains for the lion,
and those ivory poachers better watch out,
'cause Tarzan isn't finished just yet.

There's a lot of good stuff on TV,
and I can
tell 'em about it,
if they'll just pick up the phone
and give me a call.

My taste runs to ball games
and black and white movies,
but, hey, I saw that guy
walk a wire across the Grand Canyon-
there's no tellin' what I might watch next!

Sometimes I watch commercials, too,
and see salads bouncin' around in their bowls
and beer splashin' out of glasses in slow motion.
It really makes me wanta eat and drink-
I guess I'm what you'd call sorta neo-modern.

Edgar L. Frost
Norman, OK
My Sweet Carrie

She's no Tom, Dick, or Harry
she's my sweet Carrie
the sweetest girl
in the world
my Carrie, sweet Carrie.

When I see her at my door
love could not fill me more
I know her laughter soon
will light up every room
my Carrie, sweet Carrie.

With her it's no game
always loves me the same
smiles when she calls my name
she's my sweet Carrie
my Carrie, sweet Carrie.

I love to say her name
she's my sunshine and my rain
I feel her joys and her pain
she's my sweet Carrie
my Carrie, sweet Carrie.

Rudia Halliburton
McAlester, OK

Life in Oklahoma

What does Oklahoma mean to you?
Maybe it's the cattle, horses, or sheep,
Or lots of growing hay,
That you might see, almost every day.

Do you often walk on an open range,
With a soft breeze on you face?
Or fall asleep out under a tree;
There is nothing quite like this place.
Have you heard the murmur of a mountain brook,  
Or watched a stream flowing gently by?  
God speaks to us with these wondrous things;  
Showing His love for both you and I.

Just look at the wheat, acres of it,  
Growing up to blow in the wind.  
Letting us know, that in that field,  
A farmers’ work will soon begin.

Watch the plight of a scissortail,  
Trying real hard to catch a fly.  
Yes; this is really and truly Oklahoma;  
It was made for you and I.

Chuck Hutchinson  
Collinsville, OK

TO BE

“I think, therefore, I am,”  
Declared Descartes. His  
Assertion, a philosophical  
Leap forward, you see. So  
By extension, all who think,  
Are. Just to be is  
Fundamental,  
And celebratory, and,

As Lucille Clifton, an  
American poet, born black  
And female and surviving the  
Odds against her, advised, “it is  
Better to celebrate than to  
Expect laurels.” And so have  
I endured and wish to celebrate.  
Still here,

Forewarned that I was  
Too smart for my own good,  
That I was too discerning,  
Too experimental, and too “me,”  
I have lived my life. Who else  
Could I have been but me?  
Who else? I think, therefore,  
I am, remember? So celebrate  
With me our freedom and our  
Liberty. Here and now let  
The good times roll, and  
The fun begin.

Ole.

Cecil Jackson  
Tulsa, OK
To Live a Good Day

Everyone awakes each day
to something they could do or say
or think to make a difference.
Lately it occurs to me
the greatest challenge I can see
is me becoming me from day to day
in such a way that I can smile
at seeing myself reconcile
past failures, shortfalls, and misdeeds,
resentment, envy, enmity…
and clear it, as I’d sweep the kitchen floor.
Just scoop it up and toss it out the door.
If I could just get used to being
someone that I’d value seeing
then I really could be doing good!
We paint a picture every day
with each of us our part to play.
Who knows, if I could better me,
the world might follow suit.

Lee Jennings
Norman, OK

The Little Things

It’s little things that mean the most in living out your life
Like sitting down to breakfast toast and coffee with your wife;
Of watching grandkids long at play throughout the afternoon,
Or trying hard to stay awake when bedtime comes too soon.

It’s common things we practice as we go along life’s way
Like heads all bowed the table round to thank God for the day;
For daily bread, for friendships true along life’s busy road;
For times that come when we can help a neighbor bear his load.

Be thankful for The Little Things around you all the time.
When added all together they can make your life sublime.
That way of life will lift your heart, no matter, come what may,
And help you live life as you should. Be thankful every day.

LeRoy Jones
Mountain View, OK
GOD WITH US

MAY GOD WITH ALL HIS GREATNESS,
FILL YOUR HEART THIS DAY WITH CHEER.
AND TAKE AWAY ALL PAIN AND SADNESS,
WALKING BESIDE YOU, ALWAYS NEAR.
THE TROUBLE WATERS ALL ABOUT YOU,
NO MATTER HOW GREAT OR HIGH.
WILL BE CALM WITH HIS APPEARING,
STRETCH HIS HANDS AND CLEAR THE SKY.
KEEP YOUR TRUST IN JESUS RISING,
AND NEVER DOUBT HIS WATCHFUL EYE.
JUST WATCH FOR HIS RETURNING,
TO TAKE YOU HOME ON HIGH.

Robert L. Kelley aka “Speedball Kelley”
Muldrow, OK
A TENDER WARRIOR

He grew up strong as a little Kiowa boy playing his war games along the creeks.

His destiny to become a warrior with his skinned up knees and dirt stained cheeks.

Although he was a poor little Indian boy he was much loved and that’s all that mattered.

He grew up healthy, happy and bright even though his clothes were often tattered.

When he was still very young he was sent away to school to a place called Riverside.

It was there he grew in mind and stature a friend to all with his smile so wide.

While he was yet a boy and not much older he was called by his country to become a soldier.

There in the hills of a far away land, he learned what it meant to become a man.

He stayed in the service for some twenty odd years, where he knew laughter, joy and sometimes tears.

His tour of duty he served with honor and pride when it ended he returned home to work for his tribe.

But his joy was short lived as his health betrayed him. He lost a limb and his eyes once bright began to grow dim.

One thing is for sure and I know it’s the truth, he may have been down but he would never surrender.

This warrior so brave whom we all called “Tender”

Gary E. Kodaseet
Oklahoma City, OK
He’s My Friend

I have a friend in Jesus
He's everything to me.
He cleansed my soul; he made me whole.
Yes, he's the one for me.

I give my heart to Jesus.
Like him I want to be.
For truth and right, he is the light.
Yes, he's the one for me.

I know that he will guide me,
In what I do and what I say.
He'll take my hand and show me how,
To talk and walk in his own way.

I'll live my life for Jesus.
Let him my life control.
Trust him today; he is the way.
Yes, He's the one for all.

He'll touch your heart and lift you up,
When all seems looking down.
He'll cleanse your soul and make you whole,
And after life, a crown.

He's your friend.

I can sense the power of Jesus,
As he caused the blind to see,
As he walked upon the water,
And he calmed the raging sea.

As he cast out many demons,
And lifted up the dead,
As he turned the water into wine,
And fed the hungry, bread.

He walked on earth and changed the lives,
Of those along the way.
He taught us how to live and die.
He’s coming back one day.

He's my friend.

I can hear the angels singing,
Over on the other shore
Their voices blend in perfect pitch,
In praise to God forevermore.

I can hear the bells now ringing.
They toll the day of my demise,
When I shall pass through heaven’s gate,
And meet the Lord beyond the skies.
The road is sure not easy,  
From earth to heaven bound,  
With cares and trials that we must bear  
Before the way be found.

But, he’s my friend.

I know the love of Jesus,  
For he gave himself for me,  
Becoming sin for all mankind  
He bore our guilt upon the tree.

So tell the world of Jesus.  
How he can save from sin.  
No fear or strife, he’ll change your life,  
Let Jesus reign within.

Be his friend.

He promised to prepare a place,  
For all the blood washed throng.  
While gathered round the throne of God,  
They sing salvation’s song.

I can see the gates of heaven,  
That open to the streets of gold.  
Heaven’s beauty is so great,  
The half cannot be told.

Heaven is a wondrous place to see,  
But more than that – a glorious place to be.

For he’s my friend.

Tony A. McCollough  
Fort Cobb, OK
Words and poets: Diamonds and dust

Who are these poets
Builders of dreams
Flyers of fancy
Finding words among diamonds and dust

Sunsails and rainbows
Children's visions from grandparent's eyes
Sparkling laughter and dry tears
Writing words as found truth

There have been so many words
What is the use of a few more?
Do words improve with much reading?
Or do they seek the perfect reader?

Who are these poets
These singers of songs
Makers of love and life?
Are their words diamonds, or truth, or dust?

Thought hollows, snowflake shadows
Words fall to the street
Each one seeking a perfect vessel
Or to be lost and forgotten like raindrops

There! Catch that one!!
Hold it, caressing the sound
Ease it gently between the one already gone
And the next, waiting to bloom

Do they differ? The words from the poets?
Is the one love, the other life?
Were there words before poets?
Or do they spring together, indistinguishable, like diamonds and dust.

Jay B. McMillen
Norman, OK
LITTLE DIGGER

In southeastern Oklahoma there is a little farm with a trail that leads down to the barn. And along the way you will pass a small grave that's where Little Digger lays. I stand there with tear filled eyes and ask the Lord why, if a dog is man's best friend, why don't they live as long as man.

Little Digger was known from far and near, there was someone always coming to get him when they would cripple a deer. Digger's voice was loud and clear and it rang like a Bell. Could be heard in the canyons, mountain tops and along the brushy trails. When the hunt was over and the deer was on the ground, that's where you would find, that little Beagle hound. Digger was a good little hound, but he would not take teasing, not even a little bit.

If you point your finger at him and laugh, you would surely get bit.

Little Digger would bay in the middle of the night or the day, up a tree, or even a hole in the ground, I would always go to him to see what he had found. Maybe a pack rat, rabbit or a deer. Digger wanted me to be near.

On a hot July day, Little Digger passed away. His head in my lap as I petted and talked to him, I was with him up to the end.

You see Little Digger was my Best Friend, I still hunt these old mountains, But it will never be the same.

Sometimes on a still evening, just about dark, it seems I can hear Little Digger Bark. His voice is loud and clear, and rings like a Bell along the canyons, mountains tops and brushy trails.

Alvin R. Potter
Honobia, OK
NOT SO OLD

THEY SAY, I'M AN OLD OLD MAN
I SAY, I STILL CAN

AT 83, I'M GOING STRONG WITH BARELY A CHANGE
ONLY A SHORTING, OF MY PHYSICAL RANGE

I SEE AND I HEAR, ALMOST AS WELL
AND YES, I'VE PLENTY YET TO TELL

THE YEARS, OF MATURITY AND TIME
I REALIZE, WAS NOT A CRIME

MY BRAIN, CHUCH FULL OF PLACES AND THINGS
MEMORIES AND HAPPINESS, THEY OFTEN BRING

SO MANY THINGS TO TELL, AND PASS TO OTHERS
AS TO CHILDREN, OF LOVING MOTHERS

I PASSED THE ALLOTED, OF THREE SCORE AND TEN
AND THANK THE MASTER, FOR ALL THAT HAS BEEN

I KNOW, MY TIME IS SHORT
THEN JUDGEMENT, IN THE HEAVENLY COURT

IT HAS BEEN A JOURNEY, I REMEMBER THE GOOD
TO REPLACE WITH ANOTHER, I NEVER WOULD

THE BODY, MAY WRINKLE AND SAG
THE BRAIN, READY AND WILLING TO BRAG

Robert Richards
Guymon, OK
(untitled)

I was looking back to see
If you were looking back at me
I was looking back to see
If you were back at me
You were cute as you could be
Standing looking back at me
When I ran my model T
Smack ka dab into a tree
You were cute as you could be
Now you cute as you could be
Standing laughing there at me
Cause I ran my model T
Smack ka dab into that tree

Dale Shaw,
Tuskahoma, OK
ALZ
Sixty years ago
I found me a wife
Someone to love and cherish
For the rest of my life

But she is leaving me now
A little each day
Her body is still here
Her mind's going away

They say there's no cure
For this terrible disease
I'm looking to God
Spending time on my knees

I ask God to help me
Take care of my wife
So we can be together
For the rest of our life

Edward M. Shell
Haworth, OK

The Last Day of Winter

The last day of Winter O' what a beautiful day.
Such a happy ending and the beginning of Spring.
As we walked and laughed at what our friends would say.
The last day of Winter O' what a beautiful day; and as we made
love only in our minds, under God's blue sky and
in the bright sunshine.
And on the last day of Winter I fell in love, and it will live in
my memory forever.

John H. Staggs
Edmond, OK
Someday

Someday it will happen.  
The vibrant chords of life will resolve  
into a simple melody.  
The rich harmonies will cease  
leaving only the essence of the song.

Someday it will happen.  
The song of life will approach  
its final chorus.  
The rhythm will slow as the sound fades  
softly into stillness.

Someday, it will happen.

Today I will sing!  
I will raise my voice and join  
the anthem to His name.  
With all I am and all I have  
I will sing the song of life!

Today I will sing!  
I do not know what lies on the  
page beyond.  
I know only the measure that  
is before me now.

Someday it will happen.  
Love’s new song will fill the  
stillness of my being.  
With majestic chords, its glory  
will resound across my essence.

Someday it will happen.  
The song of life I sing today  
will become an endless symphony.  
And my soul’s voice will echo across  
the score of eternity.

Someday it will happen.

Today, I will sing.

And someday, it will happen.

Jerome Q. Thomas  
Fargo, OK
LIVE

RUN THE GAMUT
CHASE THE NIGHT
FORD THE STREAMLET
FIND THE LIGHT.

WALK THE PATH
SEEK THE SIGHT
STOP THE WRATH
GUARD THE RIGHT.

KEEP THE NARROW
FIND THE WAY
LOOK THE MORROW
WHILE 'TIS DAY.

EDGE THE DARK
WITH THE STAR
LEAVE YOUR MARK
CROSS THE BAR.

END THE SEARCH
TIME TO PRAY
UNDER THE BIRCHES
OTHERS LAY!

Donel Tucker
Skiatook, OK

The Shade in the Glade

I wonder as I wander if there will be
A Cedar of Lebanon waiting for me,
With its branches giving brow cooling shade,
A Rose of Sharon to brighten the glade.

I wonder as I wander if there will be
The Tree Maker Supreme waiting there for me.
A Cedar of Lebanon's eternal shade
And a Rose of Sharon to brighten the glade.

Brice G. Venable
Tulsa, OK