

*a*  
*scant*  
*bagatelle*

*Curt B. Vevang*

Curt B. Vevang

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A Scant Bagatelle

On the cover:  
a giant redwood in the rain  
California, 2012



A Scant Bagatelle

A single raindrop in random descent  
is but a trifle, a scant bagatelle.  
But en masse they paint the giant redwood,  
flood the arid land, send great ships to hell.

## DEDICATION

After being married to the same lovely woman, Susan, for fifty plus years one does not wonder to whom to dedicate his first poetry book. But you may wonder why she is not mentioned anywhere in any of my poetry. I wonder the same thing. I wonder if she wonders?

## FORWARD

In looking over the poems in this book I realize that they say a whole lot about who I am as a person. They provide many windows into my psyche, my ethics, my persona. And then again, why wouldn't they? We are what we write, we write who we are.

I'm reflecting on this subject in part because of my comments above in my Dedication. If I have written about my likes and interests then why are so few of my poems about my family. Certainly my wife, children and grandchildren are by far my greatest love and interest and yet I obviously haven't written much about them. The answer I believe is quite straight forward, I'm an engineer. Engineers have a difficult time and little interest in writing about emotional subjects such as love. We would rather write about more analytical topics such as why a turtle would stop with the boys for a beer on his way home from work.





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NATURE

The Nature of Things

The clouds on the horizon appear as mountains,  
the mountains often, as distant clouds.

Clouds are vapor - mountains are rock,  
yet we often see one as the other.

If vapor can impersonate rock  
and granite pass for air,

is it any wonder that folly  
often passes for judgment

or that intellect  
is commonly stymied by ritual.

## A Scant Bagatelle

*On Scotland's Isle of Skye there stands a majestic and quite unique mountain formation affectionately referred to by the populace as the Old Man of Storr.*

### The Old Man of Storr

True, he's abrasive, that's hard to deny,  
as time worn and gray as a Russian spy.  
He's seen more of life than a thousand men,  
yet his game's as good as it's ever been.  
Providing cover with a shepherd's eye,  
protecting the sheep that hover nearby.  
A stoic for sure, majestic and bold,  
his wrinkly rough skin has many a fold.  
From his appearance you could be misled,  
with a heart of stone and a pointy head.  
As though he came from another planet,  
yet never to be - taken for granite.  
His head's in the clouds, some think he's aloof,  
but he's down to earth, as a naive youth.  
Historic and true, the salt of the earth,  
he's perched high above the frothy blue firth.  
Sailors salute him as they pass the bay.  
He's guided many that tarried his way.  
Posing for the world with mystical guile,  
reflecting great pride on his British Isle.  
A rock among sheep, one hell of a guy,  
the old man of Storr on the Isle of Skye.

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Curt B. Vevang

Adrift in the Sea of Tranquility

Shrouded in early morning fog, I push off from the shore.

My oars navigate the still water, I leave reality behind.

The vague silhouettes dotting the shore stand guard,

protecting me from a world infested with electronic and social gadgetry.

Memories of years gone by are awakened by the cool misty breeze.

The muted melody of the few rippling waves stirs my imagination.

My old boat is but a leaky pastel reflection

of her once proud forest green presence.

I recall my many years, tugging on her oars. Now their

weathered grips are as rough as sandpaper.

Here within the creaky confines of this wooden sanctuary

I reside on a surreal island.

Nature's white noise provides a backdrop to the sounds of squeaky oar locks

and waves gently parting to make room for her passage.

Her anchor, a rusted gallon paint can filled with concrete, is

secured to the boat with a slimy, algae covered rope.

I slowly lower the anchor letting the rope inch through my hands.

Little by little it takes up residence in another world.

Another world even more remote, where the pace is slower,

needs are simpler and where nature's beauty reigns.

I attach a worm to the hook of my bamboo fishing pole.

My line hits the water as the first ray of sunlight breaks through.

I watch the shadowy tug of war between my bobber and sinker.

They dance in the sparkling water, waiting for a nibble.



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But it seems that this morning no fish are interested -- and I realize  
on this day, neither am I. I set my pole down and let it fish by itself.

Here in my boat, gently rocking to the playful beat of the waves,  
I'm sheltered from the inanity of the outside world.

Gazing at the pink cotton sky, I wonder what tranquility really is -  
if not immersion in the pleasant depths of solitude.

Curt B. Vevang

Up North

Abutting Michigan's exterior,  
today we call it Lake Superior.  
But there was a day when this great sea,  
was known by the name of "Gitche Gu'mee"  
A town called Paradise sits on its shore,  
and Tahquamenon Falls lies right next door.  
This is the site in the mystic U. P.  
where the poem Hiawatha came to be.  
One Hundred and fifty years now have passed,  
since Longfellow's epic opus was cast.

The small town's motel, "One room's all I got."  
"Non-smoking OK?" I signed on the spot.

The landscape lies still in ageless beauty,  
engulfing its aura seemed my duty.  
Awesome terrain of an earlier time,  
preserved yet today for hikers to climb.  
The area's charm gives pause to reflect,  
how was it back then? I mused as I trekked.  
The serrated hills, their secrets enfold,  
Longfellow's basis for his tale of old.  
From the falls below, now eight miles I've marched.  
A hiker's high, I was tired and parched.  
Arrived at the summit as it grew dark.  
The trailhead was perched in an old state park.  
Doubt if you will, but I knew it was fate,  
a micro brewery sat at the front gate.  
I slept well that night after two or three beers,  
dreaming of a "then" of earlier years.

The only motel, a deal at the price,  
the last non-smoking - room in Paradise.

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## PATRIOTISM

The War News

Our flat over the tavern wasn't large. As a five year old I slept on a day bed in the dining room. On the adjacent wall stood our Zenith floor model radio in its massive wooden cabinet.

I remember my dad sitting on a stool in front of the radio, hunched over, his ear inches from the speaker, listening to the war news. My two big brothers were in the Navy in the Pacific. Nothing at our house was more sacred than the war news.

One night as I was falling asleep I stared at the radio and hoped upon hope that it would somehow turn itself on. Turn itself on and announce that the war was over.

The Flag Box

*When General MacArthur retired he said "Old soldiers never die, they just fade away." This may be wonderful poetry but blatantly untrue. Old soldiers do die, and when they do the government gives the family an American Flag in recognition of the soldier's contribution and sacrifice to our country.*

My two oldest brothers were serving in World War II before I was old enough to know them. They died years later of natural causes and their families were each presented with a flag, neatly folded, exactly as American Flag Rules dictate.

As a younger brother there are few things that I could do to honor my "big" brothers that are as meaningful and lasting as making boxes for their flags. Crafting these flag boxes was a woodworking project steeped in love.

I carefully created a design constrained by the triangular dimensions of the flag. A design not too plain, not too elaborate, masculine, yet not massive.

I hand selected the cherry boards, jointed, planed and milled them to size. I mitered the corners to fit perfectly.

With each board that I sawed, every hole that I drilled, I realized that this was my final good bye to my two "big" brothers.

Every step of the way I reflected on how honored I was to be able to create a lasting memorial to them.

My hand shook as I inscribed that final "good bye" on the bottom of each box.

Discussion of the following poem

Owed to the Life of the Soldier

*Many years ago I heard the adage, "When someone gets something they didn't earn, someone else earned something they didn't get". This adage has stuck with me and has been coming to mind more and more often each time I see or hear the plight of another soldier who has been maimed, killed or suffering from a brain injury. These men and women get so very little praise or even awareness from the vast majority of our country that I was moved to write the following poem. I was an engineer who worked in the defense industry rather than serving in the military. It was important work but there was a world of difference. I worked all day engineering F4 aircraft without any one ever shooting at me.*

*Owed to the Life of the Soldier* has been published in/on:

- Poems of the World, Volume 16 #3, Spring 2012
- WestWard Quarterly, Fall 2012.
- Chicago Tribune website, Memorial Day, 2012
- American Legion National website
- Oklahoma Veterans Memorial website
- and others

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Owed to the Life of the Soldier

Sam saved our freedom by going to war.  
I worked and partied and stayed on our shore.  
I have what he earned, I've hardly a care.  
He fought in the war. Life's not at all fair.

Max was killed one day, by a roadside bomb.  
I'm here in the States in the peace and calm.  
I have the freedom that he earned for me.  
His life has ended. I'm happy and free.  
I have what he earned, I've hardly a care.  
His home is a box. Death's not at all fair.

Jane lies there in pain, confined to her bed,  
fragments of shrapnel entombed in her head.  
What price did I pay for all that I got?  
A pebble of sand compared to her lot.  
I have what she earned, I've hardly a care.  
She lies in that bed. War's not at all fair.

I have my freedom which I didn't earn.  
You paid the price and got nil in return.

Curt B. Vevang

I Saw a Flag

Not at the seashore,  
not a wooded trail,  
but downtown Chicago,  
the finish line of the Chicago Marathon.

Most runners had finished.  
Many still milling around  
some gloating in glory  
some aching in defeat.

There on the ground  
the size of a 3 by 5 card  
I saw a flag.

Not just a flag  
    an American Flag!  
        Not a large flag  
            an American Flag!

I picked it up in a heartbeat!

How many people passed it by?  
How long was it on the ground?  
Was I the first to see it?

Anyway it's just a symbol  
- so many symbols in life:  
    a dollar sign  
    a cross  
        a swastika  
            the World Trade Center.

It stands on my desk where  
    I see it every day.  
        Not a large flag  
            an American Flag!

Published in WestWard Quarterly, Fall 2015



## MEMORIES

I Didn't Know How Bad I Had It

My earliest recollection in life was living over a tavern on Lincoln Avenue. A brown bear on a leash would dance at the juke box to "You Are My Sunshine". Painters stopped in for an eye opener in the mornings on their way to work. A Swede showed up bare foot one night in the dead of winter after his wife hid his shoes so he wouldn't go out drinking.

Shortly before I started kindergarten we moved - to a different flat over a different tavern - Danny's - this time on Lawrence Avenue. Beers were a nickel and I was going to be closer to school.

Danny had a fetish for placing manikins randomly around the bar. Great Grandpa, and his cataracts, visited us from Minnesota. He complained bitterly one night as he came upstairs about the guy in the bar who wouldn't speak to him.

One day the painters came to paint a new Rheingold Beer sign on the outside of the tavern. I was so pleased to think that my house was being painted.

Across the street was another bar, the Television Inn - they had the first TV in the neighborhood. While in that bar I heard a lot of adult language. Not the kind that causes movies to be R rated, but instead lower case adult language, discussing everything from the Cubs to God, and with equal reverence.

Whitey, the bookie, managed the back room. One day, as I watched from across the street, I cried as Whitey was cuffed and loaded into a paddy wagon.

I didn't know how bad I had it.

I didn't know how good I had it.

A Scant Bagatelle

The Lawrence Avenue Rocks

It was so early, so dark and cold, but I got up anyway, got dressed, clutched my tackle box and climbed into the back seat of our old Ford. Our car smelled of just about everything a five year old boy would not like to smell at 5 o'clock in the morning: dusty wool upholstery, oil based paint and turpentine cans stored in the trunk, cigarette smoke and cold. But it was all worth it, I was goin' fishin' with my Dad.

How did you know to take your five year old fishing at five o'clock in the morning?  
- or were you just lucky?

How did you know I'd so enjoy your boyhood stories from Norway as we squinted to see our bobbers atop a pre-dawn, black, Lake Michigan?  
- or were you just lucky?

How did you always manage to catch the second fish?  
- or were you just lucky?

How did you know that I'd remember those sunrises over the infinite lake as more majestic than any sunrises that I have ever seen since?  
- or were you just lucky?

How did you know those mornings would provide a lifetime of memories?  
- or am I just lucky?

First Honorable Mention  
Chicagoland Water  
Poets & Patrons 2014 Contest

*May You Always Brake for Butterflies*

*(a father's wedding admonition to his daughter)*

*May all your clouds be in disguise.  
Stay young and kind and do your share,  
and always brake for butterflies.*

*Now sing and dance and praise the skies.  
End every day with thankful prayer.  
May all your clouds be in disguise.*

*Marriage is built on compromise,  
live with respect, mindful to care,  
and always brake for butterflies.*

*On life's highway wend safe and wise.  
When times are good or in despair  
may all your clouds be in disguise.*

*You'll have your joys, you'll have your sighs,  
you'll often find that life's not fair,  
but always brake for butterflies.*

*Time turns to dust before our eyes.  
Cherish each day with all you dare.  
May all your clouds be in disguise.  
And always brake for butterflies.*

Published in WestWard Quarterly, Spring 2013

A Scant Bagatelle

My Favorite Aunt

As the youngest kid, it never occurred,  
there were things at home that I hadn't heard.

My favorite aunt was quick with a pun,  
an Auntie Mame type, she liked to have fun.

Very pretty, she was thoughtful and smart,  
she'd bring us presents, spent more than her part.

A secretary at the Board of Trade,  
I'm sure that she earned each dime she was paid.

She'd do our taxes, on her weekend stays.  
Often she'd take me to dinners and plays.

Lived all by herself in a meager flat,  
never was married – thought nothing of that.

She took out a loan, and lent it to me  
for my senior year and all interest free.

Many years later, I recall the day,  
long after she died, I learned she was gay.

*I just can't believe what you're telling me.*  
I had never known, but now plain to see.

A different lifestyle, we're not all the same.  
I found it was true of old Auntie Mame.

My favorite aunt – how could I not know?  
My favorite aunt – now even more so.

Curt B. Vevang

Memories Enriched by Time

*The House on West Eastwood,  
a second floor flat in an old house.  
I didn't like it then, when I was ten,  
my friends lived in nicer houses...*

A single light bulb dangled from a frayed cord.  
It tried its best to brighten an attic bulging  
with past tenants' relics neatly shrouded  
in an aura of moth balls and dust.  
Racing car fenders and curtain stretchers  
mingled with such unlikely neighbors  
as old radios, cedar chests and a wooden leg -  
each a mystery needing to be explored.

A front room with hand-carved pocket doors  
so "old fashioned" they were never used  
and its beautiful passé ornate shutters too,  
remained folded up and out of sight.  
Every Christmas the front room sparkled with  
a tree that nudged its 10-foot ceiling,  
freshly cut, dripping with tinsel, filling the room  
with joyous scents from the north woods.

The dining room held a large oak table for Sunday  
dinners and hours of loud, spirited whist games,  
grandpa's bed, and grandpa, his cane, his hip brace,  
and his seldom empty coffee-can spittoon,  
an oil-burning stove that heated the flat, filled each  
evening from oil cans toted from the basement  
and a phone on a doily next to a jar of coins labeled,  
*Please put a dime in the jar if you make a call.*

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The kitchen's wood stove disposed of the garbage.  
Matches lit the water tank for dishes and baths.  
(It was religiously turned off each time to quell the  
fear that it would overheat and explode.)  
Monday's kitchen smelled of baked bread and pies,  
by Wednesday it transformed into a network  
of clothes lines sagging with "wet wash" freshly  
delivered from "Mother's Laundry".

A back porch with an always unfolded, fold-up bed,  
empty quart beer bottles awaiting their return  
to the liquor store for their 5-cent deposit,  
a panoramic view of the iconic Ravenswood  
El tracks which shared our tiny backyard and  
memories of the swoosh, power, dirt and  
screechy roaring rumble of the trains as they  
traveled the tracks both day and night.

Second Honorable Mention  
Chicago News, Politics and History Division  
Poets & Patrons 2014 Contest

Curt B. Vevang

Balloons

As a child  
I wanted most things I saw,  
balloons were no exception.

I never had many balloons.

Whenever I would ask for a balloon  
my father would tell me to wait.  
*"Wait until next time I go downtown."*, he would say,

*"I'll buy you a balloon that doesn't break."*

I was good with that.

My father never went downtown.  
He painted houses in the neighborhood.

Published in WestWard Quarterly, 2016



## COMPASSION

To those that are dear, give your time,  
to those that are sick, give your care.  
To those that are glad, share their joy,  
to those that are poor, give your share.  
If folks are different, have respect,  
and if they are down, give your love.  
This surely must be the meaning  
intended for us from above.

“Everyone in California Has a Gardener”

Not everyone, Marie, there's another out there.

He hasn't a garden, nor a lawn needing care.

But he has a big smile and a truckload of pride,

and three kids and a wife with another inside.

He wears his sombrero as he toils in the sun

and he works his three jobs till his long day is done.

He tends to your garden, when he's done then he cleans

your golf shoes at the club and Mickey D's latrines.

He gathers your discards that you leave at your curb

and they furnish his flat in a far distant burb.

Perhaps, Marie, in a generation or more

the Gardner Bank and Trust could be your banking store.

Of course it's unlikely, but such a day could dawn

when maybe your grand kids will be mowing their lawn.

A Scant Bagatelle

The Electorate

Some ignore reality,  
by the jester they are led.  
They revel in the sound bites,  
holding sway inside their head.

Some seek for simple answers,  
those that need so little thought.  
Solutions lacking substance,  
facts so often sold and bought.

Blind to all the common good,  
crouched behind a selfish mask.  
Not my problem they insist,  
*May I help*, they never ask.

Fresh ideas are dismissed,  
all new ways arouse great fear.  
They hear but what they believe,  
and believe but what they hear.

A Letter to Father Fernando

Dear Father Fernando,

Rosa and I heard the United States was the land of opportunity.  
Five years ago we gave all of our Pesos to a Gringo to sneak us into America.  
Now every morning at six o'clock I stand outside the Home Depot.  
A guy in a truck picks me up and takes me to a job.  
Yes, this is the land of opportunity - to find work - I have two jobs.  
But not the land of opportunity to earn much money - because I don't have papers.  
The guy in the truck pays me what he wants to, he knows I don't have papers.  
But we have saved \$112.14

Even with our hardship we love this country.  
We are living the American Dream, but lately my dreams are not so good.  
At night I dream we are being sent back to Mexico because we don't have papers.  
We are having a baby in two months.  
Rosa had some contractions the other night so we walked quickly to the hospital.  
The hospital is only six blocks from our rooming house.  
Well, Rosa is OK now, but the hospital says we owe them four-hundred-fifty dollars.

We only have \$112.14  
I don't know what we are going to do.  
So Father Fernando, please pray to the Blessed Virgin of Guadalupe for us.  
I don't think Mexican prayers work in this country.

Sincerely, Alfredo and Rosa

A Scant Bagatelle

I Just Don't Get It

*The Seven Deadly Sins*

*\*Pride, Gluttony, Lust, Greed, Sloth, Wrath, Envy*

*Posted by Pope Gregory the Great, May 14, 587 A.D.*

Hey Greg, I know it's been about 15 centuries  
but I've just noticed your latest post.  
It outlines what you say are the Seven Deadly Sins.  
OK, so I understand why: gluttony, lust, greed, sloth, wrath and  
envy are bad - or at least very un-churchy,  
and I'm proud to say I'm none of those things.

But tell me Greg, why is pride on your list?  
It even has an asterisk showing that it's the most important.

You mean to tell me that after the Vatican Vipers  
beat the Florence Cougars in the chariot races  
the fans don't run around screaming *We're Number 1*.

What kind of a society do you have back there?

Hey, pride is a good thing, not bad.

I have a lot of pride - pride in my hotels, my women, my  
airplanes.

Who else could keep all those humble ne'er-do-wells at my factory  
working and producing for the scant wages they get?

Sure I've made a lot of money  
but that's because I'm smarter than other people.  
I deserve what I have!  
And now you're telling me  
I shouldn't have pride in my accomplishments?

I just don't get it.

Curt B. Vevang

Walk With Me

Walking down Main Street I can't help but sense  
in each passerby's forlorn empty stare.  
People with problems and people with hurts,  
asking in silence does anyone care?

Three car garages and manicured lawns  
can't hope to disguise the sorrows that hide.  
A story's displayed on each passing face,  
so many people with sadness inside.

There's Mrs. James with two aging parents.  
Their doctor confirmed the worst of her fears.  
Her husband's drinking has taken its toll,  
the mortgage is now four months in arrears.

And in the next block, Sam sits on a bench.  
He's still out of work, his job may be done.  
Mary, his neighbor, is nearly coped out.  
Her chemo's today, should she tell her son?

I pass the high school, the pressure's intense,  
grades, sports and social - they strive to succeed.  
While dropouts loiter down at the corner,  
seeing no future - they just smoke their weed.

At the bus station a soldier returns.  
Was Desert Storm worth the loss of his sight?  
But now more pressing, a larger concern,  
homeless, he wonders, where he'll spend the night.

The fertility clinic's on Elm Street.  
For distraught women, it's their last resort.  
Ironically though, just two blocks away,  
women in anguish have gone to abort.

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Shortly thereafter I pass a shelter  
for homeless women, molested and bruised.  
They've coped for so long, a welcome relief,  
real world dilemmas, no longer excused.

So many problems we never hear of,  
all of these people in need of our love.  
Some hide their sorrow with the utmost care,  
others collapse in a burst of despair.

Second Place  
Social Conscience Division  
Poets & Patrons 2014 Contest

Curt B. Vevang



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FRIVOLITY

Where Did Mrs. Hooper Go Wrong?

My sixth grade teacher came from Great Britain.  
We learned our manners, spoken and written.

She taught that two words must follow thank you,  
always “you’re welcome,” no others would do.

But thank you today gets a strange retort:  
no problem, de nada or even a snort.

Waitress and catsup are heading my way.  
It’s been a long wait, but, “thank you”, I say.

“No problem” she says, while taking her leave.  
And under my breath I quietly grieve.

No problem for her? I surely know that.  
I had the problem and there I just sat.

We live in an age where grammar’s for naught.  
It’s all one can do to live as once taught.

Then one day last week, I heard a thank you.  
How “no problem” slipped out, I haven’t a clue.

Published in WestWard Quarterly, Winter 2013  
Distilled Lives Volume 2, ISPS 2014  
Spotlights - NWCC Newsletter Summer 2015

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My Family Reunion

I'm at my family reunion, honoring Sofie and Peder,  
two of my 16 Great, Great Grand Parents.

My other 14 Great, Great Grand Parents  
are a complete mystery to me.

These reunions are held every 5 years  
when hundreds of my cousins gather

in some Norwegian dominated community  
of Western Wisconsin to party, tour the family farms,  
partake in a Lutheran Church service and brag.

Almost all of the Great Grand Children of Sofie and Peder  
have passed away so being one generation younger,  
I'm on the cutting edge, one of the important players.

But I don't know these cousins, nor do they know me and  
since most gene identity dissipates by the fifth generation,  
the only thing we cousins have in common  
is that we have very little in common.

But we don't let that stand in the way of our celebration  
as we eat lefse, drink beer and sing *We Are Family*.

Curt B. Vevang

have you ever noticed?

no one listens to poetry  
except poets  
look around at your next open mic  
everyone there is a poet  
they listen to you because you listen to them  
those that haven't a poem to read  
have a previous engagement

i exaggerate when i say  
only poets  
listen to poetry  
at the presidential inauguration  
a famous poet delivers a poem  
to poets  
as well as non-poets

there are 18 million poets nationwide  
12 million  
write Christmas poems  
4 million are 3rd graders  
that leaves 2 million poets  
if each one writes 12 poems a year  
we'll have 96 million poems in 4 years

at the presidential inauguration  
one of those 96 million poems  
is read aloud to poets and non-poets alike  
thus ensuring that the masses  
gain a heightened appreciation  
and intellectual awareness  
of the arts and humanities

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and it works, a host of non poets  
are subjected to a wonderful poem every four years  
as they stand outside  
in a january blizzard,  
shivering, and wishing  
this whole inauguration thing  
would be over  
so they could get to the after-party and have a drink

2015 Poets & Patrons Annual Poetry Contest  
First Place - Humor Category

Mighty Megan At The Bat

Baseball's history, so old and time worn,  
    an institution – 'til Tee Ball was born.  
And suddenly now a new page unfolds,  
    We're watching a game played by six year olds.  
A warm spring evening, game time approaches,  
    no umps to be found, just kids and coaches.  
Fancy uniforms, a number and name,  
    quite a contrast from when I played the game.  
They're taught how to field, they have their "at bats".  
    Their attention span, is somewhat like cats.  
Wearing their helmets, the boys and the girls,  
    are hard to discern except for some curls.

We pick up the game, Megan's up to bat.  
    The baseball's teed up, and so's her hard hat.  
She swings with her might, misses by a few,  
    shakes it off, takes another cut - strike two!  
It's not easy 'til you once get the knack.  
    Her third crushing swing is a mighty whack.  
The ball ends up in the triangle bound,  
    by first base, home plate and the pitcher's mound.  
Megan heads to first, she takes it in stride,  
    with a little smirk that's so hard to hide.  
The pitcher, who's not the pitcher at all,  
    'cause there's no pitcher when you play Tee Ball  
runs after the ball, but when he gets there,  
    bumps into a lost, over zealous pair.  
From first and second they came to help out,  
    ignoring the din of the coach's shout.  
"Pick up the ball" you can hear their moms yell.  
    The play is at first, these children know well.

## A Scant Bagatelle

Now if you're with me you surely must know  
there's no one at first who can take the throw.  
This fact's not lost on our pitcher this day,  
a throw would be best, but there's just no way.  
So off he goes in a hurried foot race,  
because Megan's now half way to first base.  
Well this might work for a slower runner,  
but she's as quick as she is a stunner.  
Megan reaches the bag with time to spare  
two steps ahead of the ball getting there.  
These little tykes play for innings galore  
'cause there're no losers and no one keeps score.  
Until it's over, they play with delight.  
So what did the treat mom bring us tonight?  
But first they line up, each team does the same,  
high fiving each other, saying "good game."

My Family

*as told to me by my grand dog Daisy, a patient and precious Havanese*

My family is very nice to me,  
they feed me, they give me baths  
and sometimes I even get treats.  
They speak to me in some foreign, strange  
muttering. I don't know exactly what they're saying  
but I get the gist of it from the tone of their voice.

And when I really need a friend  
they're always there to cuddle with me and scratch my  
stomach and ears. But the thing I like most about my family  
is that they take me for walks. And it's so ironic  
it's usually at just about the same time  
that I need to go out and poop.

I would really rather  
poop by myself, but they  
always insist on coming along.  
I guess it's OK, although,  
they are so interested in my pooping  
that at times it just seems a bit noseey.

Then when I'm in the middle of doing my business  
I sometimes turn my head and look at them.  
And they're staring right at me,  
it really makes me self conscious,  
so I look the other way. And then  
when they cheer ... it's really too much.



A Scant Bagatelle

INANITY

I Can't Remember What the Name Is

I'm sure you've noticed, it happens to all,  
as we grow older we lose our recall.  
We start a sentence then forget a word.  
When you think of it, it's really absurd.  
The word we forget, that causes the fuss,  
is always a noun that's hiding from us.  
A person, place or thing, it's so insane;  
we picture her face, but what is her name?  
Pronouns, adverbs, prepositions and verbs,  
easy enough to remember these words.  
We use adjectives to describe what kind,  
but those silly nouns just elude our mind.  
Conjunctions -- of course, we know what they do.  
But for names of things? We haven't a clue.  
Lost articles are not, "a", "the" or "an",  
instead they're likely the keys to the van.

When we get to heaven I'll make a bet,  
things will have labels so we won't forget.  
Signs will be hung on each noun that is there:  
coffee cup, towel rack and green Tupperware,

just like all those who spend week after week  
with the foreign language they wish to speak.  
Throughout their house on each book, chair and bench  
is a Post-It Note with its name in French.

Published in WestWard Quarterly, Summer 2011.

Published in Northwest Cultural Council Poet and Artist Chapbook, 2012

A Scant Bagatelle

A Perfect Spot at Tea Time

In old London town there's plenty to see:  
castles and bridges and statues that pee.

But of all the views the top of the ten  
is a sidewalk pub, with an Old Speckled Hen.

Piccadilly Street, a four o'clock sky,  
watching the girls as they hustle on by.

Eying the legs of these pretty young maids,  
camouflaged well in my Foster Grant shades.

Legs stroll from the west, legs dance from the east,  
enjoying their role in this visual feast.

An idyllic spot for watching the sights,  
they dash and they prance - and all in black tights.

These British women with their skirts so high,  
so much to admire from ankle to thigh.

And the only rest I have for my eyes  
is now and then walk, a couple of guys.

All in Good Taste\*

Being a beer guy I'm often amused  
with wine tasting folks that blather and sigh.  
They sip and they spit as though they're confused,  
deciding I guess which one they should buy.

*To die for*, they say, *you gotta try this*,  
with pinkies held high they offer up *cheers*.  
They drink to their health, this wine, they insist,  
pretending to know the very best years.

They taste each in turn, they buy the whole pitch.  
They swirl it around and smell the bouquet,  
but haven't a clue now which wine is which.

I guess I'm lowbrow, but I'd have to say,

the very best taste that I've come across  
is coffee ice cream and strawberry sauce.

\* Originally published November 2013 in  
the Journal of Modern Poetry  
as Pleasing the Palate

## A Scant Bagatelle

### If I Knew the Code

Before computers, before bytes and bits,  
we conversed in code using dahs and dits.  
This old Morse Code was great in its day  
but “user friendly” was not its forte.  
You could only read the message sent  
if you knew the code and what it meant.

Then Western Union changed all that one day.  
Soon English was in and codes were passé,  
since telegrams had no dah dah dit dah,  
just words and greetings and other hoopla.

The next to appear was the telephone.  
You could simply talk while sitting at home.  
No reading needed, you merely said *bi*.  
Your message was sent, then came a reply.  
The very best way for us to converse.  
But then suddenly we turned for the worse.

Along came texting – once more we must read  
and typing again, it’s backward indeed.  
This new way to talk, it seems quite perverse,  
instead of progress we’re now in reverse.  
And would you believe each word now is coded?  
I thought by this time that codes were outmoded.  
There’s TTYL, CU, G2G,  
all of these ciphers – mean nothing to me.  
I could understand what the message meant  
if I knew the code, that was being sent.

Published in WestWard Quarterly, Winter 2014

Curt B. Vevang

My Spam Folder

*Sent: Sat, 26 Mar 2011 4:59 pm*

*Subject: Your Watch Says a Lot About You*

*Dreaming of a nice golden Rolex on your wrist?*

*Detailed quality replicas of the most wanted designer watches are here! Rolex, Cartier, Breitling, Bulgari - replicas at tiny prices!*

*Receive 15% off with purchases of 2 or more.*

I ignore my spam most all of the time,  
but noticed this one by its subject line.  
It told me something that deep down I knew.  
A Rolex watch says a lot about you.  
It asked if I dreamed, how could I resist?  
A golden Rolex displayed on my wrist.  
Detailed replicas, Rolex, Cartier,  
even two others I can't even say.  
I'll impress my friends wherever I go  
A replica sure, but they'll never know  
If ordered today, here's what they will do,  
fifteen percent off if I purchase two.  
Sell one to a friend? I'll buy a couple.  
A discount on each, I could save double.  
I began a list of friends I could text,  
all those who needed a classy Rolex.  
I realized quite soon I had no recall  
the watch my friends wore or whether at all.  
I remember four with a Rolex though.  
I know for a fact 'cause they told me so.  
But since I don't know the watch my friends wear,  
if mine's a Timex, does anyone care?  
And as for the four whose watch brands I know,  
those I unfriended a long time ago.

## INSANITY

*Like an oak tree in the woods  
when nobody hears it fall,  
if my poem falls on deaf ears  
did I write these words at all?*

Curt B. Vevang

## Playing Work

Young children play house.  
Young children play school.

Many years ago my working career  
began in an engineering office as a summer intern.  
Now I'm retired and I play work.  
I play work full time and with the same intensity  
as any 4-year-old plays house.

I sit busily at my desk. I answer the phone,  
I begin to announce my name, but then I remember  
it's the house phone, and simply say hello.

I line up luncheon meetings with retired  
associates; we imagine potential projects.  
There's always hope of one last, really big assignment.

Occasionally young head hunters call  
with proposed projects - projects for which I  
am totally overqualified.

They're not allowed to ask my age,  
so I tell them. I always get the same answer:  
*age is not important to our client,*  
*... how old did you say you are?*  
They have no concept people my age even exist.

The business community still needs me.  
... even though they pretend not to.

I watch for the mailman daily.  
And whenever I receive an occasional check,  
for a one day consulting job  
or for teaching a woodworking class  
or a \$2.56 royalty from a publisher,  
I savor the victory.



A Scant Bagatelle

My Bottle Opener

My favorite toy, one I'd never share,  
is my bottle opener that plays an air.

The Illinois fight song blares with delight,  
each time I open a Molson or Lite.

A birthday gift from the grandkids last year,  
they know of course that I like to drink beer.

"It's for you grandpa, it's just what you need."  
But I'm sure my wife had planted the seed.

Because whenever I open a beer,  
an amber alert now rings in her ear.

Miss Kitty's Peek Easy

Our highways are full of adult book stores.  
Their enticing names bring crowds to their doors.  
Miss Kitty's Peek Easy, Martha's Mystique,  
the Vegas Strip Mall and Bambi's Boutique.  
So what kinds of folks go to these places?  
Dropouts and thugs or familiar faces?  
I'll bet the patrons are all average Joe's,  
just college boys, pimps and politicians.  
I think I'll drop by, next time I'm in route.  
Not to buy of course, but just to check out.  
You can't walk in though, right out of the blue.  
What if your neighbor, was there and saw you?  
But seeing a friend, you wouldn't much care.  
Because you could ask, what they're doing there.  
I think I'll try it, it's not a disgrace.  
But what if just then the cops raid the place?  
They call up your wife, your priest and your boss.  
You're in big trouble, your life's at a loss.

But there is a way so you won't get caught,  
a plan to follow, painstakingly wrought.  
You send a letter on the day before  
and you tell the cops what you have in store.  
Then to be safe put a note in your shoe,  
explaining your scheme, and what you're up to.  
Then if you're nabbed, from your shoe comes the note.  
You're off scot free, once they read what you wrote.

A Scant Bagatelle

I wait until dark, it's the thing to do.

I check with my toes, the note's in my shoe.

I park around back, the air is intense.

At least if I'm caught, it's my first offense.

I'm a bit unnerved, but nobody's fool,

I'm wearing my Cubs hat just to look cool.

I walk in the place, take a look around,

for cameras or cops, but none can be found.

My vision is blurred, I see shades of blue.

Must be the sun glasses dimming my view.

The register's ringing, sweet dreams are for sale.

The product is wrapped and never gets stale.

Folks here remind me of James Thurber's dreamer,  
searching in vain for that patch that's greener.

They come from all walks, suburb and city,  
grasping for life like old Walter Mitty.

How to Impress at a Wine Tasting

Wine tasting's a game, you win or you lose,  
but it really helps to know how to schmooze.  
And don't be concerned by what you don't know,  
just drop a few terms, they'll think you're a pro.

Terms for example, like *dry* and *bouquet*.  
Some other good words are *port* and *rose*.  
Try using these words, you've nothing to lose,  
you'll even amaze your wine drinking muse.

*Foxy* and *fingers* are more terms to know,  
they're sometimes useful, but always great show.  
*Body* and *gamey* will also impress,  
you'll get nods from snobs, who know even less.

It's often been said, of the wine called port,  
for many poets, it's their last resort.  
A good term to use, a good wine to drink  
and for writer's block, it's the missing link.

Attitude carries a whole lot of sway,  
a little finesse will go a long way.  
Hold your glass smartly with flamboyant flair,  
make sure your pinky points straight in the air.

When polite folks taste, they sip just a tad,  
they sip and they spit, it seems very sad.  
I instead swallow a very big taste,  
and then when I spit there's not any waste.

## A Scant Bagatelle

After your tasting, it's polite to buy  
a bottle or two, one sweet and one dry.  
If that's too daunting, I suggest instead,  
just grab off the shelf, a white and a red.

But watch what you buy, because every time,  
you'll think you're smarter with each glass of wine.  
On the contrary, I need to explain,  
what judgment you had, has gone down the drain.

Before you go home, I've one parting tip.  
You've sipped many wines, some more than a sip.  
Bag up your purchase and settle your tab,  
put your keys away and call for a cab.

Curt B. Vevang

My Favorite Pet

Actually I don't have a favorite. Not me!

They're all pretty much the same. In a world of their own, expecting us to understand them.

Many are dirty, disgusting, self-centered, egotistical creatures.

They're all over the place, on airplanes, in parks, in bars.

They always want it their way. After a meager performance they expect great accolades.

They each have their own style, or lack thereof.

When you do pay attention to them they seem so inaccessible, so difficult to understand. We never know for sure what inane, weird or even evil thoughts they might be thinking or if in fact they are thinking at all.

They exist according to their aloof, prurient instinct. They think the world owes them a living.

Their favorite pastime is procreation. When they take a break from that they pretend to be your friend.

They lick your face, they sleep with you, they dominate your life, if not literally at least metaphorically.

Like the proverbial *one trick pony*, one villanelle and they think they can say what they want, when they want.

Whoops, I've just noticed a typo. I left out an "o" in the title.

LIFE'S LESSONS

*Fondness of the heart  
is a grandfather's gift to give and to keep.*

My First Poetry Slam

The first grade teacher quite often invites  
“Mystery Readers” to read to her tykes.  
Parents and others read books of all kinds,  
surprising the tots, enhancing their minds.  
These half hour sessions the children hold dear.  
They don’t know who’s next nor what they will hear.  
I jumped at the chance when asked as a reader.  
I’ll read them some poems, teach them some meter.  
I’ll start with some cute, easy first grade fluff,  
then move on to more, worthwhile, advanced stuff.  
I’ll end with a poem, my favorite from fifth.  
Perhaps it’s too deep but they’ll get the drift.

At the proper time I walked through the door,  
excited they sat, cross legged on the floor.  
A poetry slam and this was my first.  
It was going well as I had rehearsed.

They liked the first poems, then came the true test.  
Next was my favorite and I should have guessed.  
Mid way through the verse I saw a raised hand.  
First poetry slam, and I was the lamb.  
I knew I shouldn’t but I said “Yes, Drew?”  
he asked, “Tell me sir, are you almost through?”

Published in WestWard Quarterly, Summer 2013  
Distilled Lives Volume 2, ISPS 2014



A Scant Bagatelle

Picking Up the Pizza

Picking up pizza, our Friday night treat.

I'm standing in line at Lou's Pizza Place.

last name? - phone number? -- my address and street?

can't find my order? not even a trace?

I try once again, name - address - and phone.

The line grows longer. I get glares and stares.

The guy behind me, I hear a dull groan.

Some places today, seems nobody cares.

There's my son-in-law, I see at lines end.

I smile and wave hi, but he hides his face.

A pizza for free? You'll make to amend?

I stare at their sign, the name of the place?

I'm glad I stayed calm and didn't say more,

'cause it just hit me, I'm at the wrong store.

Published in WestWard Quarterly, 2016

Curt B. Vevang

There's a Word For It

When I was young, I had a sense,  
as I'd go in some strange new door.  
I've seen this place, I know it well,  
I know I've been here once before.  
I was surprised there was a word  
for such a sense, could it be true?  
Some Frenchman said, long years ago,  
I think I'll call it *déjà vu*.

And if I eat so much I'm stuffed,  
a two pound roast, four plates of stew.  
When all I want is my soft couch,  
I've found out now, they've named that too.  
I'm so amazed I'm not the first  
whose excess food caused so much pain.  
*Sur-feit* became a word before,  
the glory days of Charlemagne.

Well I'll show them, I'll coin a word,  
an ideal word that's just for me.  
I like to write, I like to rhyme,  
a **rhyme-ster** then is what I'll be.  
At last a word that's mine all mine.  
A perfect word, for me today.  
This word I know describes me well.  
I'll add it to my resume.

But then one day I looked it up,  
dictionaries are so perverse,  
a **rhyme-ster** is, I now find out,  
a writer of inferior verse

Published in WestWard Quarterly - Spring 2014

A Scant Bagatelle

There Really Is a Word For It

My favorite sport, an open mic,  
doing my schtick, reading my rhymes.  
A proper crowd, what's not to like.  
A hand is raised and some guy chimes.

Out loud he says, ***It's clear to see,  
a rhymester sir, is what you are!***  
This "rhymester" word is new to me,  
but sounds real good, at least so far.

He likes my rhymes, I guess he means.  
A rhymester, WOW, I've made the grade.  
It's better than my wildest dreams  
since rhyming is how I get paid.

***You're a rhymester!*** again he shouts.  
I think it's true, I'm proud to say.  
I'm big time now, I have no doubts,  
I'll post it on my resume.

But when I searched to prove my case,  
I had to do a double take.  
I soon found out I was off base,  
what I surmised was by mistake.

So now I mourn, my joy's in vain,  
it truly is a poet's curse.  
A rhymester is, it says so plain,  
a writer of inferior verse.

Where Have All the Rhymesters Gone?

Poets were loved in olden days  
but now their form has many foes.  
And while it's true, a few remain,  
it's only those who can't write prose.

A dieing breed, it's such a shame,  
their stock-in-trade has had its day.  
Especially if their poems contain  
some catchy rhymes - they're DOA.

On second thought, as I reflect,  
sometimes a rhyme may be the best,  
if you're upset and need to rant  
because of gripes upon your chest.

Don't write a note in caustic prose  
that you'll regret when once it's read.  
Just vent your bile in scathing rhymes  
and mail it to your foes instead.

You needn't fret that you'll offend  
because you wrote those nasty lines  
or that they'll be upset with you  
'cause no one reads a poem that rhymes.

Published in the Journal of Modern Poetry 15  
- Honorable Mention in the 2013 Poet Laureate of Rhyme category

A Scant Bagatelle

Poverty's Grasp

*Winter's first snow flakes were again grasping for life.*

Painters don't get much work in cold weather.  
They live on borrowed money 'til the spring.  
Five hundred dollars may not seem like much  
but it got the family through the cold winter.

I remember our annual streetcar trip to the loan  
company's posh offices on Belmont Avenue.  
Mom, Dad and me sitting at a huge desk,  
the scary loan man on the other side.  
My parents meekly stated their case and  
answered questions of no interest to me.  
But my ears perked up when I heard my dad  
explaining the collateral we had.  
A davenport and easy chair, he said.  
and also a Cogswell chair and foot stool.  
It's in good shape? asked the inquisitor.  
Oh yes, was my mother's fervent reply.  
Trying hard to be grown up and helpful  
I added that actually the chair arms  
were getting pretty ragged and worn out.  
My forearm can still feel the subtle grasp  
applied so tactfully by my mother.  
Enough to demand my full attention  
but not enough to cause a distraction.  
I got the message and shut up at once.

The loan was approved as it always was,  
with payments as always month after month.  
By the fall the loan was paid in full and –

*Winter's first snow flakes were again grasping for life.*

Curt B. Vevang

## ANIMAL FRIENDS

Talmage the Turtle

As I readied to hike the old lake road,  
I was told the town had a stringent code.  
If on the road, there's a turtle in stride,  
you must move him with care, off to the side.  
With this advice I was off on my hike.  
Will I meet a turtle? What are they like?  
Actually though, I'm in amazement,  
just why a turtle would cross the pavement?  
But maybe they must - on their way to work.  
I'm sure they know well the dangers that lurk.

Hey - I see one now, he's kissing his mate,  
with lunch pail in hand, he heads out the gate.  
He gets to the road and across he heads.  
Hustling and watching for cars and mopeds.  
Then out of the blue, a hand from above.  
He's whisked back home in what passes for love.  
a kind hearted sole, obeying the rule  
But to a turtle it's an act so cruel.  
For now he's back home, back home at his door,  
from whence he must trek, off to work once more.

When he gets off work he stops for a beer.  
To steady his nerves and quench his great fear.  
Then bravely he's off, he heads for the road.  
Will he get across? be crushed? or be towed?  
By now you've guessed it, he didn't get far,  
grabbed once again and placed back at the bar.  
He calls his dear wife to tell of his fate,  
"Hi turtle dove, I'll be a little late."



A Scant Bagatelle

Nightmares plague him at the thought of the sight,  
    of an alien hand grasping him tight.  
He tries to lie still, pretends to be dead.  
    Possessed by such fear he draws in his head.  
There he cowers, in still rigor mortis,  
    this once - ancient, bold and mighty tortoise.

Published in Northwest Cultural Council Poet  
and Artist Chapbook, 2012

Persona Non Grata

There once was a time, we welcomed these friends.  
They crossed the border from another land.  
But who can predict why a friendship ends?  
And now there exists a line in the sand.

I'm sure they can sense our wrath and disdain.  
They keep to themselves, they quietly grieve,  
wondering sadly, do we feel their pain.  
With so many young they don't want to leave.

They try to fit in, at least in their way.  
While once so beloved I find it now strange,  
*Persona non grata* is what people say.  
They are, who they are, one's feathers don't change.

Time's up Mister Goose, you've caused great concern.  
Canada, I hope, will let you return.

Illinois State Poetry Society  
2015 Annual Poetry Contest  
2nd Place in the Formal Poetry category

A Scant Bagatelle

A Sad, Sad Tune for a Worthless Raccoon

A dark country road, then two yellow eyes.  
With no time to stop, I heard the sad cries.  
On a night in June, damn worthless raccoon.

Now what should I do? Do I make a call?  
Would a shelter care, or answer at all?  
Am I a buffoon? This silly raccoon?

I grabbed for my phone, will they laugh when I say?  
The ranger's pickup, was fast on its way.  
They'll be here real soon, poor helpless raccoon.

Her starlit sad face, pummeled and bleeding,  
staring at me, she seemed to be pleading.  
Beneath the full moon, my friend the raccoon.

Why I called for help was suddenly clear,  
so many in pain both distant and near.  
A sad, sad tune for a precious raccoon.

The Fairer Sex

His forest green head's a wondrous sight.  
The male mallard duck's a good looking dude.  
But his female friend has a sadder plight.  
With her drab house dress, she's in a foul mood.

The male's called a Drake which adds to her woe.  
This frumpy young gal has all the bad luck.  
Instead of a queen, or vixen or doe,  
she's known in the trade as simply a duck.

Clever of nature to paint her so bland.  
She's camouflaged well to sit on the nest.  
Why nature does this, we all understand,  
but not all species can pass the same test.

These roles are reversed in the human race,  
where women possess all the style and grace.

A Scant Bagatelle

Through Sad Eyes\*

I was adopted a few years ago,  
time goes so fast I'm not quite sure when.

It's not that I'm not treated well or  
that I'm not a lot better off than I was

but deep down I can sense that I'm just not one of the family.  
The way they look down at me.

Sure they buy me nice toys, but I know the toys they buy  
their biological children cost a lot more than mine.

I know they love me and I love them too - maybe even more so,  
even if I'm not allowed to sit on the new couch.

And once when company came I was locked in the basement,  
as though they were ashamed of me or something.

But the crowning blow came just a couple days ago  
when they all left for Disneyworld.

I thought we were all going but at the last minute they  
dumped me at the neighbors. Imagine how I felt.

Well at least it's better than a week at the vet.

\*This is a major revision of the original poem of the same name self  
published on the Illinois State Poetry Society website.

Why These Two?

Walking through the park  
I no longer need my stocking cap.  
After the icy black winter  
this chapter is a gift.

Pink cotton clouds adorn a sunshine sky,  
as though placed there  
by a third grader's paint brush  
dripping with tempera.

The deep snow has once again  
begun to slither back into the porous earth.  
Blackbirds scrounge the parkway searching  
for delicacies they haven't tasted in months.

My intrusion arouses their nervous instinct,  
scores and scores flutter away,  
all but two,  
why these two?

One's a male with a bright yellow bill.  
The other's a female, not black, but brown with a spotted breast.  
They're not eating,  
but staring aimlessly - perhaps amorously.  
Blackbirds mate for life,  
surely this fact is not lost on these two.

Are they discussing their future plans?  
Or are they merely like me,  
catching a breath of sunshine  
after a long, bleak winter.

CONTEMPLATION

*the best gift of all to give if you can  
is to treat with respect your fellow man*

Great, Great, Great, Great Grandfather Who?

*The number of ancestors that each of us has extends exponentially back in time. Looking back less than 200 years at a moment in time, six generations ago, we each had 64 great, great, great, great, grandparents.*

Sixty-four people, a slice from my past.  
Sixty-four people from whence I was cast.  
Because of these folks I look as I do.  
My strengths and my faults are impacted too.  
They affect my health, the shape of my face,  
they provide my genes, determine my race.  
I know so little of their lives it's true,  
but then about me - they hadn't a clue.  
Can you imagine their utter dismay  
if they were to see a grandchild today?  
How great it would be to gather them all,  
to hear their stories, their hopes and their call.  
From Europe, Asia or some other place,  
who knows who they were or even their race.  
Some may have been rich or worked in the trades,  
horse thieves, or soldiers or pretty bar maids.  
Did they consider their tree's future fate  
while they were courting and choosing a mate,  
that someone like me would end up to be  
a distant grandchild and their progeny?  
Amusing just how they impact my day,  
those sixty four folks with my DNA.

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When It's All Said and Done

Can a Caribbean cruise provide the romance of  
navigating a wooden row boat through still waters at daybreak?

Can the music of the world's great orchestras compete with  
the emotional high of a high school concert choir?

Can tickets to the World Series compare to the excitement of  
a little girl with special needs knocking a baseball off a tee and  
scurrying haphazardly to first base in the heat of a Miracle League  
game?

Can the best hotels of London and Paris compete with  
your own bed at the end of a long day, a crossword puzzle in hand?

Can the finest restaurant in the world compete with  
a fried egg sandwich at the kitchen table?

Can the glitz and elite status of the social world compare to  
the mundane simplicity of an old friend?

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What Happened to My Yesterday?

What happened to my yesterday?  
Who gives a damn, I get my way.  
I'm young and tough, I make good pay,  
and old enough to have my say.  
I have it all, I live in bliss.  
It's only fools who reminisce.

What happened to my yesterday?  
Those happy days, with kids at play.  
Their childlike ways when they were ten.  
They're older now than I was then.  
Where did they go, I surely miss,  
but not my style, to reminisce.

What happened to my yesterday?  
I'm not quite sure. I just can't say.  
I'm older now than I was then.  
I can't remember where I've been.  
Excuse me, nurse, what day is this?  
So sad, too late, to reminisce.

A Scant Bagatelle

Half Way Up the Mountain

*I feel for those with less,  
I feel for those with more.*

From my perch half way up the mountain,  
I can see the very peak.  
I can look down and see the foothills at the base.

The bottom can't be seen by those at the top.  
Many there have no concept  
the bottom even exists.

Some arrive at the top  
after a long, arduous climb,  
others are born there.

Days at the top are spent amassing more and more,  
worried they will lose what they have,  
struggling to maintain their footing on the slippery slopes.

Those at the base search for a foothold,  
a pathway up the mountain.  
Many languish in repeated defeat,  
unable to climb very far before being stymied,  
forced to try a different trail.

Some try hard,  
others don't try at all.  
Some are successful,  
a few haven't the tools to even begin.

I see an occasional climber passing by.  
They nod and trek on.  
Seldom do they question.  
They *know* where they're going.

Who Was That Strange Girl?

Home on the train and her car wouldn't start.  
I've seen this movie, I recall the part.  
She wanted a lift two miles down the road.  
No interest at all in having it towed.  
Only half my age and needing a ride?  
The next thing I know she's there at my side.  
I had stopped in town to pick up some beer,  
when out of the blue this lass did appear.  
As we drove along I mentioned to her,  
*I'll drive you on home if you would prefer.*  
Then taken aback, by her terse reply.  
*The corner is fine, I can't tell you why.*  
I did as she asked, my mind was a swirl.  
What had just happened? Who was that strange girl?  
Could be anyone -- looked tired and plain;  
the end of the day and home on the train.  
Her face and attire seemed average enough:  
not too squeaky clean -- and yet not too tough.  
Not Graveyard Mary, it was broad daylight,  
although I confess, I mused that it might.  
A common hooker? Did she have a knife?  
But maybe instead, some young preacher's wife?  
Am I out of line to have such weird thought?  
With stories today, who knows what one ought.  
Seemed pretty nervous, sitting at my side.  
I wonder just why she asked for a ride?  
She just might have been -- entranced by my charm?  
Was it the six pack that swung from my arm?

A Scant Bagatelle

Perhaps I've a case of middle-age zeal,  
    like Walter Mitty when dreaming turns real.  
Why didn't she want a ride to her house?  
    Was she the Tom cat and I but the mouse?  
Each time I drive now I look as I pass  
    to shed some light on that curious lass.  
I'd sure like to know just where that gal stood.  
    Was she going home? -- Or up to no good?



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*curmudgeon - a person (especially an old man) who is easily annoyed or angered and who often complains*

As I am sure is apparent, the poetry I write doesn't conform to the rigid rules of poetry that are followed by serious poets. BUT - what is free verse anyway? Am I not free to write as I wish? To rhyme or not? To tell rather than show? I accept that I am weak on meter, seldom use metaphor or simile, don't understand line breaks, think most alliteration is contrived and most slant rhyme is quite by accident.

My goal in writing is simply to enjoy writing while at the same time providing the reader with something I hope to be equally enjoyable.

Curt Vevang

