

The Poets Among Us



The 2020 Collection

Here you will find an assortment of poems written by the Poetry Class at Emerald Court Senior Living in Anaheim, California. The Poetry Class was formed in 2019 by Herman Sillas. His wife, Cora, does the collecting, organizing, and scheduling for the class. Herman, a seasoned writer, painter, and poet, wanted to share his love of poetry with his neighbors at the community.

An assortment of residents joined the class, many of whom had never written poetry in their life. The Poetry Class could only meet during the first two months of 2020, but they continued to write even when they could not meet in person. Please enjoy the many poems they came up with throughout the year; you will read stories of love, family, getting older, and the infamous coronavirus itself.

Though you will read many poems in this book, there are plenty of poets that attended the class who's poetry may not have been featured in 2020. Below is a list of the many Poets of Emerald Court.

Herman Sillas

Cora Sillas

Eleanor Vernon

Dan Michalak

Ruby Takemoto

Vi Thompson

Connie Cariello

Jeanette Renck

Judy Peach

Betty Truesdell

Betty Iehl

Heloise Lunde

Billie Whitsett

Chet Singley

Jakki Pierson

Barbara Risco

Yvonne Rasmussen

What is a Poem?

By Dan Michalak

What is a poem?
Is it words on a paper that
rhyme?
Or is it reflections of things so
divine?
Maybe it's feeling the mind
can't forget
Or is it thoughts that have
found an outlet
Or is it remembrances that
were merely concealed
Or a thing from the past
now revealed.
These words that are written
do tell
Of a time and place memories
dwell.

The Emerald Court Group

By Dan Michalak

Who are these people and why are they here?
All I know I learned this year
Some are old, others older
Some are wise, others wiser
Some are lonely, others lonelier
Some are cute, others cuter
Some are nice, others nicer
Some are happy, others sad
Some are sorry, others glad
But all are here and that's not bad.

Nocturnal Poetry

By Eleanor Vernon

In the middle of the night when
I'm lying in bed,
Bits and pieces of poetry run
through my head.
Though I toss and I turn, curtailing
my sleep,
I might write a poem I may want
to keep.

So I go through the alphabet,
starting with "B,"
Followed by "C," then "D," "F,"
and "G."
Repeating this process, I came to
discover:
Before completing one rhyme, I
had started another.

Open Arms at Emerald Court

By Vi Thompson

You welcomed me with
open arms and if you don't
know what that meant,

I was recovering from
illnesses and I felt the
time was well spent.

'The Poets Among Us'
was the place for me

And I was received
so graciously

Having a focus to be among
others, whether they be sis-
ters or brothers,

Gave me purpose to be out
and about. It was healing
to be with others.

And just when we find each
other, road blocks got in the
way, but have no fear, dear
poets, we'll still have our
day.

We'll support one another
and share our poems,
and watch and see where our
memory roams.

Poetry Dilemma

By Ruby Takemoto

I have to write a brand new poem
before our meeting date
I hope I'll be able to think of one
before it gets too late.

I have to think of a topic;
I have to think of a rhyme.
But I haven't got a single theme
to write about this time.

I wish I could think of what to write;
I don't know what to say.
I guess I'll go without a poem
to our meeting today.

Thoughts

By Connie Cariello

My friend is going to poetry
class what am I missing?

Beautiful words of sympathy
for a loss in our group by a
fellow named Chet.

A lady named Jakki with two
'Ks.' I love that.

Dear Eleanor so shy with her
words about her precious
great grans.

And Herman shared the ex-
perience of a Mexican wed-
ding.

Dan recited a beautiful poem,
by heart, for goodness sake.

We were impressed!

Others not quite ready to
share, but... it... is... right
there.

Maybe next week. So much
potential. I was missing a lot.

I have to come back.

New Path to Travel

By Vi Thompson

Herman and Cora, little did I know
That meeting you would show me a
new way to go.

The opportunity and creativity I was
looking for,

Came when I walked through the Eye
Doctor's door.

Cora, your smile and reception when I
spoke,

And Herman, your invite, What a
lucky stroke!

So here I am, becoming a part

Of the poetry class, what a nice start!

Retirement

By Ruby Takemoto

Eat and sleep and sleep and eat—
Retirement is pretty neat!

With social security and a pension,
too—

You're free to spend as you
wish to do.

Move to a retirement community
Where they clean and cook for you
for free.

You can come and go as you
please,
Be very active or stay at ease.

Too bad retirement starts so late.
Who says it's better to
make us wait?

Let us retire at an earlier age
While we're still in a playful stage.

We would enjoy it so much more
Now that we know
what's in store!

Exercise at 95

By Eleanor Vernon

The headlines remind us on every
page,

Regardless of gender or age:

“Exercise, move, feel the burn,
work the core.

Again, and again once more.”

So I bend and I reach, I stoop and I
stretch,

Circle around—and begin to feel
spent.

Getting dressed in the morning is
very much like

A major “athletic event.”

Then I walk to breakfast and I
walk to lunch,

And I walk to dinner and back.

Now wouldn't you think, at age 95,
I'd deserve, and be given, some
slack?

So spare me the Zumba and
aerobic classes

That promise I'll flourish and
thrive;

Just let me get through my daily
routine

And be thankful that I'm still alive.

Old Man's Folly

By Herman Sillas

Always in the mind's back closet
Covered with memory dust,
occasionally wiped with
feathers of hope
by an invisible hand of dreams
as other items cluttered space
and hid it from people's view

Inside, its location was known
as it curled like a smoke
from a smoldering fire
as a reminder of its existence
but evaporating in the air
or blown away by other needs

First, parents, then love and wife,
then children, duties, jobs,
bills, plans,
payments, weddings,
grandchildren, other outings,
but inside, it still smoldered
like an echo of a silent voice

Hair missing, head clean and shiny
stomach protruding, muscle missing
less years to live, than lived
less living acquaintances than before
and now the glow began to
grow and grow

An old man's folly they called it
he didn't care, it was his to be
to laugh, to sin, to follow
to make sure he did what he
was supposed to do
better to follow the folly than
remain hollow

Other old men keep their secret
fearful of being called fools
fearful of the sound of
other's laughter
to keep it hidden from view
back room closet where
it dies... with them
die the respected gentlemen
die as is, but unwhole...
pity, they don't understand
they were only little boys
who took time out... to be a man.

My Body

By Herman Sillas

Time caresses my body every second
of the day
Unnoticed as it touches, unfelt or seen
Thin, transparent fingers invisible to the eye
Day to day, my body remains the same
Week to week, no one can tell
Month to month, not even a clue
Year to year, I thought I saw something
Decade to decade... I see a change.

How did it happen?
Who is to blame?
How did I get older?
How did I get so fat?
When did my hair change color?
Where did it fall?

I keep an eye out every time I can
But time is tricky
It seduces my youth without a sound
The departure goes undetected
Nature's law bars recapture
Age's uninvited silent arrival
Never announces a specific date
In the long run, I guess it's okay.

I can wait

The Pendant

By Eleanor Vernon

The first thing I do when I
get out of bed
Is to put my "call-button" on
over my head;
Like a soldier receiving the
"medal of valor,"
Placed by the President for
bravery in war.

Sometimes I pretend that the
pendant we wear
Is a symbol of battles that
we've fought before;
So wear your medallion
proudly, I say,
It's proof that you're willing
to fight one
more day.

Ode to Life

By Jeanette Renck

It's a strange world in 2020.
Since my birth and it isn't funny.
So much has happened each year,
Births, weddings and deaths too, I fear.
But that's life as we all see now
And we accept it as we know how.
We've made new friends,
We've accepted new trends.
Good, bad or wonderful.
Life is still beautiful.
The sky is blue, the grass is green,
I guess I'll live out life behind this
screen—
Of what we call Emerald Court.

Coronavirus

By Heloise Lunde

You unloved critter,
Hated by all
Get out of our lives!
So we can again have a ball.
Go to baseball games,
Our churches and social events,
Eat our meals without dread
Even when others have touched our bread.
Good bye and good riddance—
so no more of us die!
To you we will gladly say “good-bye.”

Shut Down!

By Jakki Pierson

My room wraps around me like
a tomb.
I'm lonely and frightened—
Not ready at all
for this kind of gloom.

I wonder—Oh! I wonder—
If this ever ends—
Will I still have my kin—
My brother, my daughters, my
granddaughters, and all of my
friends?
If—No! When
I get to see them again,
I'll have a “rebirth”
And be happy once more
As those dear, dear loved ones
come knocking—pounding
even—on my door!

Written on 04.21.2020

Lockdown, day 22

For Fifty-Nine Years

By Dan Michalak

For fifty-nine years of hugs and kisses,
For fifty-nine years she was my Mrs.
For fifty-nine years she was divine,
For fifty-nine years she was all mine.
For fifty-nine years of love and worry,
For fifty-nine years that time did scurry.
For fifty-nine years her love, so fine
For fifty-nine years my valentine.
For fifty-nine years to heaven she'd go,
For fifty-nine years I loved her so.
For fifty-nine years of hugs and kisses,
For fifty-nine years she'd been my Mrs.
At fifty-nine years why did she go?
At fifty-nine years I missed her so.
For fifty-nine years.

Vows

By Billie Whitsett

This time tomorrow your marriage will take place
When with love and devotion your future you will face.
Are you quietly sleeping or laying wide awake,
Thinking how serious are the vows you are about to make.
Will your heart beat faster or slow down from a run
As the start of your new life has begun
Going from a novice to a nun.

Man with a Friendly Face

By Ruby Takemoto

A man who has
A friendly face
Has a winning style,
A hidden Ace!
Life is easier
With a winning smile
Friends line up
For a country mile
A girl who marries
A man like this
Will always live
in wedded bliss.
A happy marriage,
A wonderful life.
For this happy man
And his lucky wife.

Kelsey and Dan Got Married

By the Poetry Class

For better or worse,
for richer or poorer,

Many good wishes
from near and far.

For this choice that you've
made that you've never been
surer,

You accept each other
for all that you are.

The bride is lovely,
the groom sedate.

And forever you remember
this quite special date!

As you travel through life with
your new togetherness

May all the days be thrilling
time.

Love, health, and happiness we
hope you are blessed

That your new life together
is none but sublime.

My Happiest Moment

By Chet Singley

Sixty-two years ago was the happiest
day of my life,

For I took a pledge that I vowed to
keep.

A golden moment bought with love
and devotion.

Occasionally that golden moment
may lose some of its shine due to a
memory in decline.

It can easily be restored and bur-
nished anew

By remembering that sensation of
original love;

Experienced only by us two.

As three score and two are slowly
slipping from view

I will always have that moment of
happy tenderness as received lovingly
from you.

Endless Love

By Jakki Pierson

I sometimes think you
should bury me,
Within the sight
Of the pounding sea—
Endless waves, washing in
To blanket me
In sea sounds—
Not that I can hear or see it,
But you will be comforted,
By endless sight,
And rhythmic sounds,
As wave after wave pounds sandy
shore.
True, I will be no more,
But my love, for each of you,
And your memories of me,
Will not.
You will carry my undying love
For each of you,
Forever in your heart and soul.
So, in knowing that,
I think I should be buried

Closer to home,
Than the far off sea shore.
Bury me close,
Under a shady tree.
That way,
When you are troubled
And simply need to talk to me,
Come sit, come sit,
Beside my grave,
And feel the love
And hope and courage
I have tried to instill in each of you.
No, I cannot answer you,
But you will still feel my presence—
And your own heart will answer.
In this way,
I'll be with you still,
My sea of love for each of you.
Stronger than the waves falling to the
sandy ground
And more endless than the sea.

What is Love?

By Dan Michalak

Love can be a nebulous thing
It can make hearts worry
It can make them sing
It can't be touched
But it can be felt
It can make hearts harden
It can make hearts melt
It causes much regret
When its greatly spurned
And it's heaven on earth
When it's truly returned
Some say it fools with your "ego"
And it messes with your brain
That it muddles up your thinking
And that it is so "lame"
We are richer when we have it
And poorer without
We certainly do need it
Of this, I have no doubt
All I know is when we have it
We are as happy as we can be
And when we do not have it
We are sad; both you and me

Sisters

By Herman Sillas

The first one takes a little piece
But leaves some behind
Not knowing who or how many
will follow
The next one does the same.

On the outside as they grow
They search to match the pieces
They know when it isn't right an
inner voice tells them so.
They've heard it before when all
alone inside.

Friends they will have
Husbands they will marry
Children may come from their
own.
Yet there will be those moments
When all the pieces match
As sisters they smile
Sharing their secret treasure
From their mother's womb.

The Voyage

By Eleanor Vernon

My “in-laws” were born on British soil...
Simple folk, humble folk, far from royal.
One day they decided to seek their fortune
In another location beyond the pond.

So they packed their bags,
Took their two-year-old son,
And crossed the Atlantic
On a ship called the “Baltic.”

The voyage was not totally sunny and fair.
One night thunder and lightning pierced the air.
Fog horns were blowing, searchlights were glowing,
Passengers became ill with the ship’s “to and fro-ing”

The mother, who was frightened. Said to the father,
“Sam, I’m afraid this ship is in deep distress.”
To which he replied, hoping to lessen her fears,
“Don’t worry about it, Nell; it doesn’t belong to us.”

When the family arrived on our welcoming shore,
They were thankful, as were the Pilgrims before,
Who had suffered far greater discomfort and strife.
Each immigrated to America to begin a new life.

Love—That Miracle of Life

By Heloise Lunde

How can one explain that all-enveloping rapturous feeling?
Eyes meet, hands touch—and suddenly the world is different.
The sky is bluer, flowers brighter.
His face, his name dancing in your brain every waking moment
Life sings!
Without love, life would be poor
With love, life is rich.
It sustains us even after the death of our beloved.
Our memories enriching our lives forever.
Thank you, God, for giving us the ability to love!

A Secret Longing

By Dan Michalak

She was quite tall, with features fine
With golden hair, she was divine.
But then I knew she'd never be mine
I had nothing and was so poor.
She had not known of her allure.
I'd ask her out and take a chance
For heavenly bliss or for romance.
It never happened; backgrounds so different.
My dream was gone; funds so deficient.
I'll never know if she suspected.
My feelings for her went undetected.

[No Title]

By Judy Peach

My husband was so dear to me.
He was such a wonderful human being.
He didn't think very highly of himself.
He didn't know who his father was.
He felt empty at times.
He was such a wonderful dad to our three sons.
He was a giving person.
He was going to be 80, but he passed away just before that.
He was my sweet valentine!
His birthday was on Valentine's Day.
I'm sure he's looking down on us all.
He would be so proud of our boys and their families.

Equal Skin

By Herman Sillas

God's seamless container for bones and muscle
Air tight to all blood and fluid inside.
Protector from wind, sun, and rain
Smooth, porous, pimply and sometime calloused.
Holder of hairs, straight, curly or kinky.
Tight at places, while baggy at other locations
Canvas for scratches, scabs, scars, and tattoos.

The same pattern for every human body
Head, torso, arms, legs, feet, and hands.
Maybe some cover thinner, some thicker
Some smaller, some larger, some coarser than others
Makes no difference, the function is the same
Package the bones and contain the fluid

God uses different dyes, does it matter?
Does God like a skin less, because of its hue?
White, black, brown, yellow or red, what about blue?
No choice of tone does a human get
God gives the body whichever skin is next
No preferences intended, no punishment meant

God liked my color, it's fine with me
Do you like your shade? If not, too bad... too late
Not return skin to the Maker until it's been used
We are wrapped in the same fabric
None fancier than the other, only different stains
Some view the hues from biased eyes, believing...
They are better or less from shades of past kin
Pity the fools, they don't know we have equal skin

Conversation

By Betty Truesdell

“Did you know she’s Asian?”

“No, I didn’t.”

“Did you know he’s African-American?”

“Not a clue, no.”

“Did you know she’s Hispanic?”

“I hear a slight accent, but that’s a broad term.”

“Did you know he’s Native American?”

“No, but what a great heritage to have.”

“Did you know that gay couple got married?”

“No, but why not?”

“Do you know that he used to be a she?”

“No, but what courage!”

“My, what an open mind you seem to have.”

“Thanks. I’ve come to see, no pun intended, that the sightless use other senses to discover the essence of another person, and that is a gift—to get to know people for who they are.”

The New Tax Form

By Eleanor Vernon

My sister from Grass Valley called me recently one night,

To share some good news that had just come to light.

The senior center where she lives was all a-buzz:

“A new tax form helps seniors more than the standard form does.”

My sister hadn't looked into it, but said that she would,

And advised me to do likewise as soon as I could.

Happily and optimistically, I climbed into bed,

Deductions and refunds dancing in my head.

Early the next morning I called my tax man,

Hoping he'd have answers and tell me all he can.

“It's true, it's not a rumor; there is such a form;

Called the '1040 SR,' it is more than the norm.”

It might benefit me also, I heard him say,

But, unfortunately, not in a financial way.

To begin with, it's abbreviated; and one further hint:

It's available to seniors in “Extra Large Print.”

Cruiser's Complaint

By Betty Iehl

Oh, it's travel that broadens the mind,

So say all the adventurous kind.

But with all this

reclining,

And wining,

And dining,

I fear I have

broadened my behind.

Antarctic Reflections

By Betty Iehl

While reviewing

my slides of

South Georgia,

where the glaciers

just seem to come

toward ya,

It is hard to contend

with the yawns of a

friend

who says “Ice must have certainly bored ya.”

Ode to Chocolate

By Ruby Takemoto

Chocolate, oh chocolate—
You are so divine.
Promise me, oh promise me
That you will always be mine.

Chocolate, oh chocolate—
In cake, or cookies, or candy,
Unwrapped in tiny pieces of foil
You are always handy.

Chocolate, oh chocolate—
You are oh so sweet.
For Mother's Day or Valentine's
You are the perfect treat.

Chocolate, oh chocolate—
To us you have been given.
So have a piece and enjoy
A little bit of heaven.

Limericks

By Jeanette Renck

A pet's not a pet without a name.
A ball is needed to play a game.
They're our closest family
forever and ever,
Till death do us part,
we are wed forever.
Just like humans we're all the same.

A butterfly flutters around,
Over hill and valley and mound.
Like a rainbow, it comes after the rain,
To soothe the sadness of
this pandemic again,
We need the butterflies to abound.

I have a snail vine outside
my back door.
It's been there for two years or more.
It's blooming lavender flowers,
Thanks to our recent showers.
So give God thanks for his
help evermore.

[No Title]

By Billie Whitsett

Stretch me, Lord but
gently, please,
Give me strength and
let me do
Whatever it is
you want me to.
Stretch me Lord,
but gently please,
You know I am weak
(wobbly knees)
I want to be strong
and do my best,
But Lord, it's comfortable
at rest,
So stretch me, Lord,
but gently please.
Brace my back,
steady my knees
Lest I break from lack of use
or think I've been
given abuse
A rubber band from Jesus,
Let me be one of these,
So stretch me, Lord,
but gently please.

*Written after a sermon by
Floyd Srater about being
able to stretch for Jesus*

Heaven Bound

By Ruby Takemoto

When I get to heaven,
My eternity will start.
And I will sing unto my Lord,
“My God, how great Thou art.”

Heaven will be a wondrous place,
As I have always been told
With pearly gates and lovely clouds
And streets all paved with gold.

My life will soon be over;
My time here will not be long.
Then I will worship my Lord and God
With my favorite song

If I should go before you do,
I will wait for you
And meet you at the pearly gates
And watch as you come through.

I'll laugh and be happy once again
With all my Emerald Court friends
For always and eternity
And for time that never ends.

Seventy Balconies

By Cora Sillas

Seventy balconies has
this mansion
Seventy balconies and
not even a flower!
What is wrong with the
inhabitants, Dear Lord?
Do they not like
the fragrance?
Do they not like
their perfume?
Do they not like
their color?
Seventy balconies and
not even a flower!

Wishing

By Betty Truesdale

You may wish upon a
four leaf clover
or perhaps a falling star.
You may send a wish to Santa
or throw a coin in a fountain
afar.

However, be careful
what you wish for,
It might come true.
And it is not exchangeable
Refundable, or returnable!

Happy wishing!

Waiting Room Blues

By Billie Whitsett

My appointment was for 10 o'clock
New patient must be 30 minutes early
Older patients be here 15 minutes early
Is that age discrimination?
6 pages of questions they gave me
Which I tried to answer in my
Unreadable script, who knows
If they can read it. I can't.
Now the waiting room is full
With one standing by the door
Oh did I mention their computer's down?
My appointment time was an hour ago
Finally they called my name, on the scales
I go, oh goody I thought I've waited so
Long maybe I lost a pound or two,
Didn't happen but I got a room and told
To wait and so I did. They ran some tests
And I waited some more.
The doctor came in
He wants to take two medications away
But give another one.
Come back in two weeks
To do all over again.
Giving me another day
For waiting room blues.

Competition

By Jeanette Renck

To the Spelling Bee I shall go,
Hopefully with my mind in tow.
With Ben Davis as my partner,
as I'm sure he is smarter
and in better mind than me,
So today we will see.

What does the future hold in store?
A little of this, a little of that, maybe more.
I'd love to win a prize.
With God's help, maybe it will materialize.

A Rose... as Life

By Yvonne Rasmussen

A tight green bud, so full of life and promise...
As it unfolds, its wondrous beauty untold...
Each petal unique from the Master's palette.
A spectacular presentation of creation.
As the rose continues to blossom, each stage is captivating and
amazing...
And when the rose reaches the end of its unfurling...
The memory of it's individual beauty and unforgettable scent will
linger on long after the grace of its presence is gone.

I Need To Be Alone

By Heloise Lunde

I need to be alone some
quiet place to think,
To rediscover what life
was meant to be.
Somehow, in the daily rush
and race,
Shallowness has overtaken
me.

Perspective's lost in the
muddle of little things
That are part of life, but
not the whole.
In solitude I seek and hope
to find
A breath of fresh air for
my soul.

Whales

By Vi Thompson

Though featherweights,
they would not be,
Flowing through the water so effortlessly,
A picture of power and beauty, and grace,
Whales, gliding from place to place.
Entering their world as man has done,
At times, it seems that we are as one.
Misjudged, as they have been,
in years gone by,
Opinions have changed as we look
through man's eye.
Their voices mingle in tones, high and
low,
perhaps announcing the path they will go.
behemoths they are, according to our
scale,
and Oh! So beautiful, as through the wa-
ter they sail.
Whales have been called gentle giants and
such,
and through the years, man has learned so
much.
Mankind could benefit in various ways,
if we could glide through life with beauty
and grace.
Powerful and enormous, though they be,
We're allowed to touch them, trustfully.
These beasts are beauty in fluid motion.
Learn more about them, now that you
have the notion.

Autumn Leaves

By Yvonne Rasmussen

Like hanging jewels, a trees'
adornment, in hues of burnished
amber and the richness of gold...

Colors so vivid to announce
a season's coming... cool
crisp autumn breezes invite the
becoming of winter...
as those lovely autumn leaves
fall to create a glorious carpet
of color...

Oh? This enchanting season of
change... gatherings are coming
with family and friends we hold
so dear, to share our grateful
hearts with those whom we are so
caring...

Those autumn leaves, colorful
reminders of times so endearing!

Midwest Memories

By Betty Truesdell

Did you ever run and play in the soft summer rain?

And count the colors in the rainbow?

Or, did you hide your head

When the thunder and lightening struck too close to your bedroom window?

Did you pretend that you were a drum majorette

As you strutted up and down the block,

Twirling your imaginary baton,

With marching band in tow?

Do you remember smelling the bonfires in the fall,

Marveling at the autumn leaves,

And cheering your football team

Lined up against their foe?

Do you remember hearing the magical silence

Of the first fallen snow?

And did you don your snowsuit, cap, mittens, muffler, and boots,

And then off to school you'd go?

Do you remember the exhilarating freedom

Of skating on a frozen river

That stretched

To and fro?

Do you remember the Christmas when you returned to the house where you were raised?

With the same wreath on the door, the candle aglow in the window,

Warm memories filling your heart,

With you realizing this would always be home?