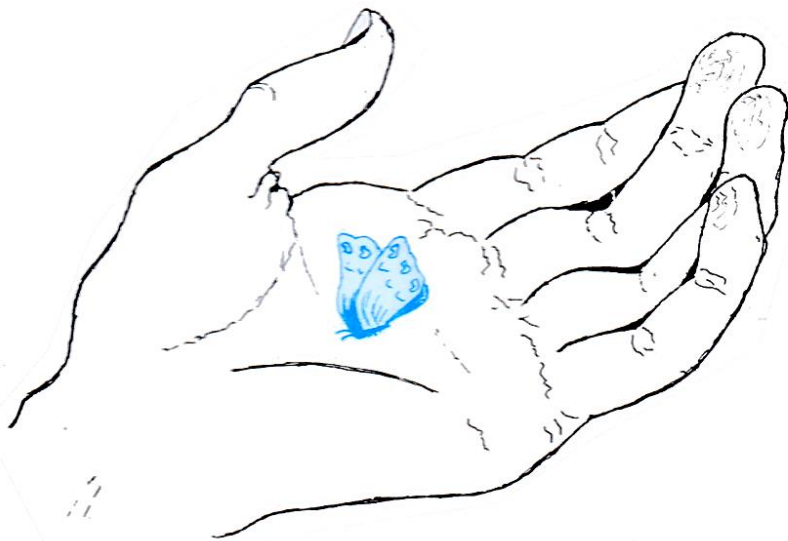


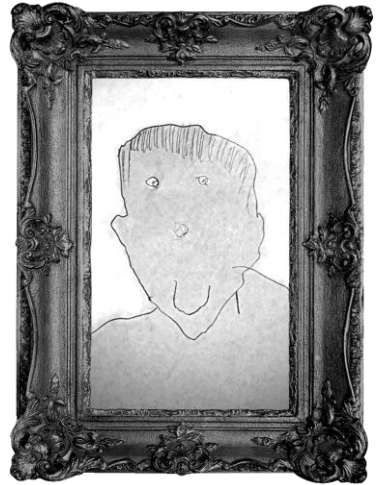
In The Master's Hand



by
C. DOUGLAS STERNER

Introduction

I'm an old man. How old? The photo at right is a portrait Rembrandt did of me when he and I were both quite young and starting out. I like to think both he and I got better at our craft as we got older. Of course, this was one of his early works, and if he were still alive, I imagine he would be upset with me for displaying one of his earliest and less-glorious pieces of work.



Well, of course, that really isn't a Rembrandt, it is actually a portrait my granddaughter Tara Sterner-Neely drew of me for this book, but it does illustrate a point I wanted to make by way of explanation of why I was reluctant to publish this particular book. As artists, whether in paint, words, or any other medium, we start small, hopefully improve and develop, and in retrospect sometimes feel embarrassment when we look back at our earliest feeble attempts.

In the summer of 1958 my family visited the Redwoods in northern California. While there I was struck by a small display: two men sawing a log while in the background a narrator recited poet Joyce Kilmer's work "To a Tree". Already an avid reader, it sparked my interest in poetry. A few weeks later in my 3rd grade class I authored my first written work that I titled "Secrets of the Forest." It is included herein and as you read it, you will probably notice the rhythmic pentameter that mirrors to considerable degree, Kilmer's poem that inspired my first written work. I was told that my poem was published in an Oregon school publication that winter, which if true, also makes it my first published work.

Although I wrote my first novel, a World War II fiction book titled "The Hero" during my sophomore year of high school, and a second novel in my senior year (neither was ever published), most of my early work was poetry. In my writing I always attempted to challenge myself and push the envelope. After reading Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner" I challenged myself to try and write an epic poem. My work herein titled "Nature's Revenge" was the result. Another example of how I challenged myself to write outside my own life and experiences is the poem I titled "A Little Girl's Prayer", my attempt to write

something from a woman's point of view. The poetry aficionado will probably see my obvious effort to mirror the story-telling poetic style of Robert Service, one of my favorite poets, in "Traces of His Love."

The year I graduated from high school I wrote a 10-page poem to our graduating class. It included a quatrain to each and every member of our class. Fortunately, I graduated from a small high school in Eureka, Montana, where there were only 64 graduating seniors.

Two years later I was nearing the end of my first (of two) tours of duty with the U.S. Army in Vietnam. With more available money in savings than I had ever had before, in mid-1971 I decided to compile and self-publish a collection of my poetry. I wrote "In the Master's Hand," the last poem of my short-lived poetic career, for the cover poem. In a letter to my younger brother David, who had some artistic talent, I outlined some specific drawings for both the cover and the interior pages. By the end of the year I held the first copy of the 2,500-copy run.

Within a few years I had sold or given away all of them – I didn't even have a copy to show my own children when they became old enough to appreciate the poet I once was. Then, in 2002, a cousin in Montana mailed me a box containing my medals and other memorabilia I had sent to my Uncle Jack while I was in Vietnam. In that box was the first copy of that book I had seen in decades.

For years, for nostalgia's sake, I pondered re-printing that book. Usually I quickly talked myself out of it. The collection represents my earliest writings, some of which I was embarrassed to admit was mine. Further, the author reflected in those early writings was vastly different from who I am today. In my teen years I was a romantic who loved roughing it in the Bob Marshall Wilderness and other outdoor environments. Further, my Faith was central to who I was, some would say, to an extreme. Decades later my Faith has taken a bit of a beating, and my idea of "roughing it out in nature" these days involves a 30' motor home with a big screen TV and a refrigerator full of food and Pepsi.

Alas, I have bowed to nostalgia... and to family history. I do hope you, the reader, find some enjoyment in these pages.

C. Douglas Sterner
August 2019

In the Master's Hand

By
C. Douglas Sterner

ART BY
DAVID P. STERNER
TARA NEELY-STERNER

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FROM THE AUTHOR

“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man that thou art mindful of him?” (Psalm 8:3-4) These wonderful words came from one of the most well known of poets, David, many thousands of years ago. But the message is echoed again and again in The Bible, our theological concepts, and in all of creation. God is greatly concerned about man, unworthy as we may be. He alone controls life, and all of our circumstances are ordained by him.

At the time I wrote the poem from which the title of this collection was chosen, I was serving in the Army in a war-torn country, facing ever day the realism of death, despair, fear and uncertainty. But even those thousands of miles from home I suddenly found my life was still in the hand of the Master.

As a boy I was somewhat of a romanticist, and would spend hours enjoying the beautiful surroundings of my native Montana. And as I grew older I became aware of a wonderful presence in and through it all, the presence of Him who created it all. And when I placed my life in the great hand of God who expressed Himself in all that I saw, I knew that all that was made became an expression of God’s love to man. Indeed all things are held in the Master’s hand, and I pray that you will find this echoed in this collection of poetry.

C. Douglas Sterner

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* "Our Angel" was authored by my father, Claude W. Sterner

IN THE MASTER'S HAND

Toward the ending of the day,
 When I feel tensions mounting;
The pressures seem to crush my soul,
 And I sit quiet, pouting.

I'm feeling sorry for myself,
 For how the day's gone wrong;
And search my soul for one gay note,
 Or one show, happy song.

My burdens seem to drag me down,
 My mind is wracked in anguish;
I long for any place to hide,
 And comfort is my only wish.

But when it seems that all is lost,
 And life has turned against me;
I bow my head and close my eyes,
 Until an angel's face I see.

He speaks in soft and quiet tones,
 And tells me to be calm;
He say's I'm safe from every storm,
 I'm in the Master's palm.

Then I see how foolish is,
 My tension and alarm;
In Jesus' hand I am secure,
 I'm free from every harm.

Then I say a prayer of thanks,
 To God for His safe-keeping;
I open not my eyes again,
 For now I'm peacefully sleeping.

WHO?

What maiden thrills,
at daffodils,
that dance upon the breeze?

I wonder who,
brushed off the dew,
that wet the clover leaves.

What artist's brush,
painted the lush,
rainbow in the sky?

Who wrote the song
birds sing along,
as smoothly they fly by?

Who tells the sun,
to daily run,
across the sky of blue?

What master's touch
mixed paints and such,
to give the dawn its hue?

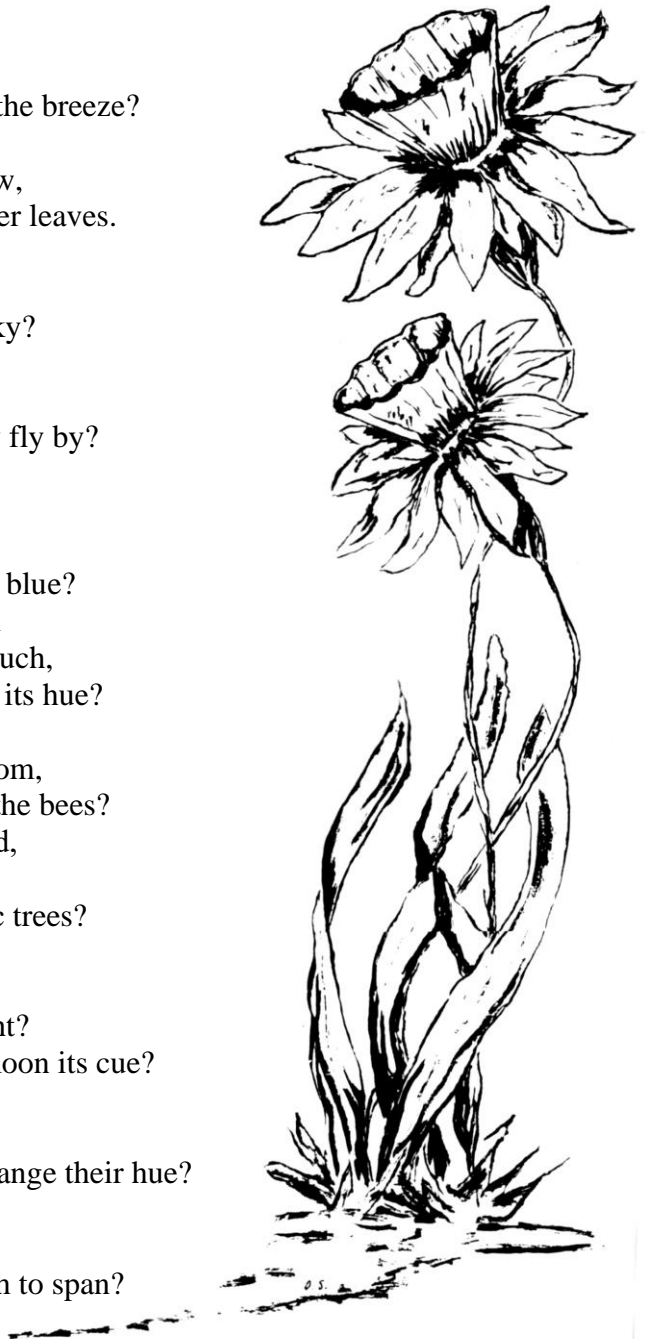
Whose gay perfume,
gave flower in bloom,
a scent to guide the bees?

What sculptor's hand,
adorned the land,
with tall majestic trees?

Whose gay delight,
made stars for night?
Who gives the moon its cue?

Whose fickle mind,
at autumn time,
tells leaves to change their hue?

Who caused the sea,
and lakes to be?
Who tells the fish to span?



Back in the trees,
 where deer run free,
 who speckled the tiny fawn?

Whose marvelous plan,
 created man,
 from lumps of clay and sod?
Some folks might say,
 things just happened that way,
 others say “Nature” – a few say “God”.

But happenstance,
 made not these plants,
 the sea, sun, sky or man.
There is none other,
 creation’s mother...
 Mother Nature, God’s right hand.

GOD’S PLAN

God has a plan for everyone,
 A work for them to do –
 To die for us, He sent his Son.
 Can we, like Christ, be true?

Can I be true to God’s plan for me,
 And always do what’s right?
 Following Christ I’ll never stray,
 For He’s my guiding light.

THE SON OF GOD

Look! Behold on yonder hill,
There hung God's son in pain;
 There upon a lonely cross,
 His only son was slain.

Lift Him from that rugged tree,
The Lamb of God is dead;
 Take the splinters from His hands,
 Take the thorns down from His head.

A king – born in a bed of straw,
Born of a virgin womb;
 Now a body, cold and dead,
 Lying in Joseph's tomb.

But on the first day of the week,
As soldiers guarded the door;
 A light shone bright, and blinding them,
 As Christ rose, to live evermore.

Have you a problem? Ask for His help,
He's alive, in Heaven above;
 Great or small, just give Him your all,
 He will answer, for He is love.

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Good habits become your policy, and your policy becomes your personality. Your personality makes you the person you are. Center your habits around Jesus Christ and they soon cease to be a habit, but become an integral part of your daily life.

A LITTLE GIRL'S PRAYER

They say that learning comes with age,
As experiences are compiled;
But I know wisdom isn't learned,
For I've seen it – in a small child.

They say that parents are the teachers,
And often this is so;
But wisdom.... born of innocence,
Is something only children know.

I can't forget the things I learned,
From my little girl one night;
When on my lost and shattered life,
Her wisdom shed a guiding light.

She'd gone to bed an hour before,
So I chanced to take a peek;
And there before my eyes she knelt,
A tear upon her cheek.

"Oh God," she prayed, "please bless my mom,
And bring my daddy home;
'Cause we both know it isn't right,
For them to live alone.

"I know my daddy maked mistakes,
I know he's sorry too;
Why even mom and I sometimes,
Do things we shouldn't do.

"You know the little girl next door,
Well now and then we fight;
But we get sorry in the end,
And try to make it right.

“So why, when mom and daddy fight,
Can’t they get sorry too;
And then forget the wrong they’ve done,
Like the neighbor girl and I do?

I know that mommy misses dad,
‘Cause sometimes I see her cry;
Of course she say’s there’s nothing wrong,
Just something in her eye.

“She doesn’t lie on purpose, God,
But I’ve known from the start;
What really causes her to cry,
Is something in her heart.

“And I know sometimes daddy must,
Think of mommy and me;
And though men aren’t supposed to cry,
This is where he wants to be.

“So bring him back to us again,
And tell mommy to forgive;
‘Cause we both know this is no way,
For a mom and dad to live.

“I know I’m just a little girl,
And really not very smart;
And yet I’m sure a mom and dad,
Shouldn’t live apart.

“They love each other, I am sure,
More than all the world;
But no one needs them together as much,
As me ... their little girl.

“I don’t think I’m asking for too much,
Just to make our house a home again;
So we can all live happily,
Oh thank you, God. Amen.”

My heart was touched as I closed the door,
And turned to find a man standing there;
Shameless of tears upon his cheeks,
The answer to a little girl’s prayer.

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“For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

“So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”

ISAIAH 55:10-11

A PASSING THOUGHT

A cloud went by many years ago,
And now has a story to tell;
How it dropped a single bit of water,
Never knowing where it fell.

That tiny raindrop landed,
And soaked into the ground;
Giving life to parched, dry soil,
Where a seed was found.

Life-giving water touched the seed,
And it began to sprout;
Its hardened shell now had a crack,
With a white root sticking out.

And then the shoot began to reach,
Slowly to the sky;
To catch another drop of rain,
From a new cloud passing by.

A week went by and then a month,
A year, a century;
And from that tiny seed now stood,
A young, majestic tree.

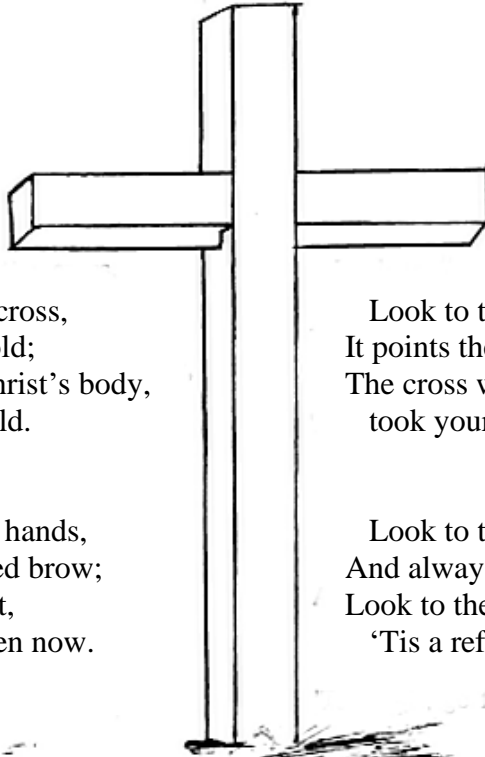
It pointed upward to the sky,
It's beauty its refrain;
To the cloud that once had passed,
And left a drop of rain.

And though the cloud would never know,
Just where the raindrop fell;
It did go forth and fiend a seed,
It served it's purpose well.

And so with we who work for Christ,
For we may never know;
The barren soil we've brought to life,
Or what we've caused to grow.

Though we see nothing while we're here,
We know that when we've passed;
The prayers and tears we left behind,
Will bring a soul to bloom at last.

Look to The Cross



Look to the cross,
Behold – behold;
There hung Christ's body,
Dead and cold.

Nail-scarred hands,
A blood-stained brow;
A broken heart,
But He's risen now.

Look to the cross,
It points the way;
The cross where Christ,
took your sins away.

Look to the cross,
And always be true;
Look to the cross,
'Tis a refuge for you.

SECRETS OF THE FOREST

I love the forest's soft, cool breeze,
That blows from spring to Christmas eve';
While Squirrels scamper to and fro,
Gathering nuts before the snow.

E'er gently flows a rippling brook,
Sheltering trout in every nook;
And birds dance high up in the trees,
While rabbits hide in fallen leaves.

There, a fawn, still speckled white,
Grazes in the soft sun's light;
A small bear cub climbs playfully,
From stump to stump and tree to tree.

These sights I name, though lovely be,
Were never meant for us to see;
Tho' poems like this are often told,
They're sights that only God beholds.

*"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor
and power: for thou has created all things, and for thy
pleasure they are and were created."*

REVELATIONS 4:11

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*"Rejoice evermore.
"Pray without ceasing.
"In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ
Jesus concerning you."*

I THESSALONIANS 5:16-18

DIVINE FRIENDSHIP

I am His and He is mine,
 Oh what fellowship divine.
He guides my feet each step I make,
 And gives me every breath I take.

In Him is strength to face each day,
 He stands beside me all the way.
He wipes each tear that dots my eye,
 And brightens every cloudy sky.

A million years is not enough,
 To thank Him for His matchless love.
But to those who haven't found Him yet,
 I'll sing His praises until my death.

For love so great is meant to share,
 With the many lost and in despair.
So they may find freedom from sin,
 This wondrous love I found in Him.

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LIFE

Life is a highway,
 Success is the goal;
 Time makes the rules,
 Death's the control.

The tomorrow you look for,
 Is so far away;
 While the now that you live for,
 Is here for today.

LIFE - DEATH

What is life –
– or do we know
What power –
– makes it come and go?
What is death –
– What makes it come
And steal Life –
– from everyone?
Life and death –
– two curious things
But strange –
– two different feelings brings.

What is youth –
– for like a toy
You so often –
– brings one joy.
But youth may pass –
– so what is age?
And is it Time –
– that turns the page?
Youth and age –
– two curious things
But strange –
– two different feelings brings.

He brings us life –
– who governs death,
He gives us youth –
– then age, to rest.
But is it Time –
– that turns the page
To bring us death –

Such a theory –
If death followed age –
But look much closer –
Death steals age –
For youth is oft' –
And one yet young –
Our hearts are sore –
And turn to God –
– and bring us age?
– would be fine
– all the time.
– you will tell,
– and youth as well.
– snatched in the cold.
– will never grow old.
– sometimes we cry,
– and ask Him “Why?”

The power to give –
And a right to destroy –
And yet we question –
When we know full well –
For he brings death –
And it is **God** –
– is the right to take,
– what e're He makes.
– and wonder still,
– it was God's will.
– who brings us age,
– who turns the page.

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Live like Christ is coming today. Plan like He isn't coming for a hundred years.

Prayer turns stumbling blocks into stepping stones.

OUR ANGEL

There is an angel in our home,
Who works her fingers to the bone.

When we get up she dresses us,
And with a washrag makes a fuss.

Then she sits us down to eat,
Which in itself is quite a feat.

When we are done it's out to play,
While our angel kneels to pray.

But she knows her heart alone,
Can not for our mistakes atone.

When we fight and scratch and bite,
She swings a belt with all her might.

Then we cry and scream of course,
For our hearts bleed with remorse.

Then she lays us down to rest,
That we may grow up to our best.

Then when we are fast asleep,
The floors of our house she must sweep.

And do the dishes, clothes, and such,
And pretty up herself so much.

So when dad comes home at night,
He will be pleased beyond delight.

When we are sick and in despair,
Her shining face is always there.

To guess her name you need not stutter,
For you must know, she is our mother.

MY SIN

'Twas my sin that crucified Jesus,
My sin let Him die on a tree;
The wonderful teacher and healer,
The Stranger of Galilee.

But He said to His Father, "Forgive them,
"They know not what they do;"
My Jesus was kind and forgiving,
Just ask Him and He'll forgive you.

At the fourth hour he cried, "It is finished."
As he died on that old rugged tree;
People saw God's own Son as He hung there,
And gave His life for you and me.

His body was placed in a tomb,
And a stone rolled over the door;
But nothing could seal him forever,
And He rose to live ever more.

Now my sins have all been forgiven,
I'll think of them never more;
And someday I'll live with this Jesus,
On Heaven's great golden shores.

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

ROMANS 8:17-18

TRIALS

Safe am I within His love,
And nestled 'neath His arm;
Protected by His matchless grace,
'Er Satan does me harm.

I face the times of trial and scorn,
When Satan brings me woe;
And in myself I often ask,
“My God, why is it so?”

But Jesus said, “Take up your cross,
“If you will follow me;
“For it’s the trials and jobs you dread,
“That bring the victory.

It takes a stove of scorching heat,
To melt the rough-mined gold;
But when all alien ores are gone,
It's ready for the mold.

And so the trials that come my way,
And often bring me pain;
Are like a fire-smelting stove,
To burn out every stain.

And through the trials that come my way,
I'm purified for His mold;
That when the Lord does call me home,
I'm shaped of purest gold.

*But He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath
tried me I shall come forth as gold.*

JOB 23:10

NATURE'S REVENGE

The roar of a tumbling waterfall,
Is reaching to my ears;
The soft, sweet scent of wild flowers,
Is floating in the air.
The buttercups and daffodils,
Are dancing to and fro,
And here and there I find a patch,
Of still unmelted snow.
The mat of soft, green, grassy hills,
Is cushioning my feet;
While high above the sun smiles down,
To make the day complete.
To right and left I see the signs,
Of God's creative hands;
While deer, the bear, and small red fox,
Are all part of His plans.
The birds are busy building nests,
All singing while they work;
While now and then I see a rabbit's,
Small puff tail jerk.
Around my feet the chipmonks play,
As if I was their friend;
The deer walk up and have a look,
But soon dart off again.
The trees are green and full of life,
From squirrels to tiny birds;
The beauty of this wondrous place,
Is far too great for words.
My view ranges from snow capped peaks,
Then out across the plain;
From tall fir trees and wild flowers,
To fields of wild grain.
But I must go, and move away,
Yet swear I will return;

Unto this place of solitude,
As yet I've much to learn.
(Today I am twelve years old.)

I said before that I'd come back,
And so I have, you see;
But something strange has happened here,
It's not the same to me.
I'm now eighteen and full of life,
And I have learned so much;
But still I do not feel the same,
Have I grown up that much?
Or is it this place that has changed,
Those few years I was gone?
The answer I don't really have,
I just know something's wrong.
The trees are scattered o'er the hills,
Some scrapped, some burned, some stumps;
And at my feet the once green grass,
Is all pushed up in lumps.
I hear the waterfall as yet,
It tumbles o'er the rocks;
But now the water's filled with mud,
And pieces of tree bark.
The wild flowers are eaten down,
By cattle men have brought;
Unmelted snow is dark with blood,
Where cat and bull have fought.
The squirrels stay back in the trees,
They come no longer near;
The deer I see have haunted looks,
Interpreted as fear.
The fox are gone without a trace,
And small bear cubs are scarce;
The birds still sing in tall, dead trees,
Their song is sad, of course.

The sun beats down as if to scowl,
At something very strange;
And all of nature seems to groan,
As if it is in pain.
I wander off in deep remorse,
We threw God's work away;
And yet I know there'll come a time,
When Nature will repay.

Is twenty years since last I stood,
On these o'er trodden slopes;
The only thing that brought me back,
Is stirring of new hopes.
Again its changed from grassy hills,
On which I used to stand;
It's different from the place I saw,
When cattle grazed this land.
The little stream no longer falls,
Down the barren rocks;
A concrete ditch has taken it around,
To water thirsty crops.
The grass is all turned underground,
Wild flowers don't exist;
Save for petals cut and strewn about,
Oh what these men have missed.
The hills are lined with sprouting grain,
Or newly turned up dirt;
The deer, the bear, the small red fox,
Are driven from this earth.
The birds no longer fly about,
Because there are no trees;
Fertilizer is the only,
Scent upon the breeze.
The squirrels, oh how can they exist,
In a world of this kind?
As far as life, beyond the crops,

There's nothing I can find.

The plains and hills I care not view,
For all I see is wheat;
Man has slowly killed life out,
Stamped God's work with his feet.
I'm thirty-eight and wiser now,
And as I limp away;
I know that there will come a time,
When Nature will replay.

I've left these slopes now, thrice before,
Each in a different light;
And now at eighty-five I find,
Another change in sight.
The water is completely gone,
The ditch is red and dry;
A petal I can't even find,
Where flowers used to lie.
The deer, the bear, the small red fox,
Have died out long before;
The squirrels that used to play about,
Are heard of nevermore.
Fresh, clean snow – on concrete walks?
Oh come now, what a joke!
The birds that used to be so gay,
Will sing no other note.
The trees, the cattle, and the wheat,
Have disappeared from sight;
To be replaced by man-made towers.
Oh! Nature's met her plight.
And up above in vengeful rath,
Beats the angry sun;
For men have scorned God's handi-work,
The night has now begun.

How things have changed since I was twelve,
And then I look around;
For I have changed since I was twelve,
I've also been stomped down.
My limbs are weak, and numb with age,
I'm passing like the dew;
My days are numbered, one by one,
For I am dying, too.
God's handi-work has been torn down,
And man's rules have been played,
But Nature's taken her revenge,
I know, I've been repaid.

A B C'S OF CHRISTIANITY

A is for action,
have you done your part?
B is belief,
that should be in your heart.
C is for Christ-like,
the path Jesus trod;
D is for duty,
to man and to God.
E is for effort,
are you doing your best?
F is for faith,
will yours stand the test?
G is for Godliness,
in every small deed,
H is for help,
to all those in need.
I is intent,
the way I'll do my chores;

J is for joy,
 since I found the Lord.
K is for kindness,
 that I'll try to show;
L is for love,
 I'll give wherever I go.
M is for melody,
 down deep in my heart;
N is for new,
 as a new life I start.
O is obedience,
 with everything God has to say;
P is for prayer,
 have you done some today?
Q is for quiet,
 in rest with the Lord;
R is that rest,
 as we digest His Word.
S is for study,
 those times that we rest;
T is for trials,
 when we're put to the test.
U is unworthy,
 of all Christ has done;
V is for victory,
 when battles are won.
W is for witness,
 as we preach God's Word;
X is for xiphoid,
 sharper than a two-edged sword.
Y is for "Yes Lord,
 "I'll do all that I can;"
Z is for zeal,
 In following God's plan.

HEAVEN BOUND

May Savior's coming draweth nigh,
And time shall be no more;
I hope to meet Him in the sky,
And enter Heaven's door.

I long to see Him as He is,
In garments all a-glow;
Coming to Earth to take back His,
Beloved children, here below.

I'm heavy bound, for e'er to be,
And sing around God's throne;
That wondrous, joyous melody,
Of love and peace, on Earth unknown.

CARELESS WORDS

Time alone can heal the wound,
That careless words inflict;
That thoughtless word of yesterday,
When tempers rose so quick.

That term you really didn't mean,
It just rolled off your tongue;
It broke another person's heart,
Yet both of you were stung.

It came as lightly as a breeze,
On a summer day,
Now all of your apologies,
Cannot chase it away.

It's up to you to make it known,
That you are sorry now;
And hope that time will clear things up,
For them, and you, somehow.

So next time when your temper boils,
Think before you speak;
And you will know within your heart,
Your friendship's at its peak.

SELFISHNESS

Half my life I've wasted,
Caring not for anyone,
Half my life I've thrown away,
for just a little fun.
I did the things I wanted most,
And paid no heed to care;
Then halfway through my life I found,
I'd missed something, somewhere.

I had the things I'd dreamed I'd get,
For luck had come my way,
I wore a smile in effigy,
Of those who seemed so gay.
And then the signs of old age bloomed,
Around my like a flower,
And I realized that while I'd lived,
I'd wasted every hour.

I lived my life in mockery,
Of everything that's good;

I played around and lived as if,
 My heart was made of wood.
I never harmed a single soul,
 I stayed where I belonged;
I never hurt my fellow man,
 And yet I did him wrong.

It wasn't harsh words I had said,
 Or bad things I had done;
It was the kind words and good deeds,
 I'd given to no one.
The cries for help that I ignored,
 Each beggar by the way,
And then I learned I was worse off,
 Than they could ever be.

They didn't have the gifts I had,
 The money or the fame;
They hadn't traveled 'round the world,
 And few folks knew their name.
But they had found what counted more,
 What I needed most of;
The thing my money couldn't buy,
 And that, my friend, is LOVE.

WHY

Why wait 'till tomorrow?
 Death won't.
Why lend or borrow?
 Death won't!
When times runs out,
 your life is through;
 So why not do now,
 What you can do.
Or when your life has finally passed,
You'll leave behind an unfinished task:
 BUT DEATH WON'T!

THE SHADOWS

Just as sure as the tied rolls in,
Day upon day without fail;
So come the shadows at even' time,
As daylight begins to trail.

First comes the red in the western sky,
Then the evening star starts to shine;
The moon starts to rise o'er the mountain tops,
Slowly, taking it's time.

Shadows begin to take on shapes,
As darkness engulfs the land;
Save for the moon and stars overhead,
For night is nigh at hand.

But on in the night the moon disappears,
And the stars sink back out of sight;
My sojourn is hindered, for I cannot see,
When I'm lacking a guiding light.

And I find this is true in the life that I lead,
For with every deed that I start;
Work must come to a halt when the shadows creep in,
Unless I've God's light in my heart.

MY RETREAT

Nature has a place for me,
I call it "My Retreat";
There I can get away from man,
Where life's serene and sweet.

There flowers play their lovely games,
And trees dance to and fro;
There birds can sing and bluebells ring,
'Tis Paradise I know.
And deer run freely through the fields,
As if they had no cares;
And so 'tis true, for in this place,
There is no room for fears.

So I'll go and hide away,
To praise my God above;
Shut in with Him in prayer and praise,
And basking in his love.

THE CHORE

You'll never move in life, My friend;
By sitting still,
No faith or will,
To start until...
Someone else begins it in the end.

It's up to you to start, My friend;
By stepping out,
No fears or doubt,
Be firm and stout...
And you can't help but win it in the end.

Life is always like that, My friend;
 You've got to prove,
 By your own move,
 There's naught to lose...
By fighting it out to the end.

So go ahead and start, My friend;
 You'll be a man,
 And prove you can,
 Do better than...
You'd hoped you'd do, in the end.

TRACES OF HIS LOVE

In this age of PhDs,
 And visits to outer space;
We've shots and pills for everything,
 And life's a frantic race.

We've books on every thought of man,
 And formulas miles long;
We've modern math and chemistry,
 And theories by the throng.

And man's so proud of all he's done,
 And the knowledge in his head,
He tries to claim it all himself,
 And shouts that God is dead.

Now a man I knew in a northwest sate,
 Faced such a theory one time;
And the story of his wit and wisdom,
 Is a definite favorite of mine.

The Christian was an Indian guide,
 An old man of sixty-five years;
Whose job it was to guide hunting trips,
 In the wilderness, hunting for deer.

A man from New York, and atheist by claim,
 Went hunting for big game one year;
He hired the old Indian man for a guide,
 Now the real story starts here.

Each morning before the New Yorker arose,
 The guide started fixing the meal;
But ne'er came a day that before he began,
 He didn't find a quiet place to kneel.

The very first day when the atheist awoke,
 He saw the old guide kneeling there;
His mind was amused by so silly a sight,
 As the old man kneeling in prayer.

He proceeded to laugh, and jeer the old guide,
 For doing a thing so absurd;
But the old guide looked up never wavering a bit,
 Not a frown – not even a word.

“Is there really a God?” the atheist asked.
 The old Indian just nodded his head.
“Nonsense,” said the atheist, “and if ever there was,
 “Today He is surely dead.”

The atheist went on to mock and to scorn,
 “How do you know this God is real?
“Have you seen Him or touched Him, can you hear Him talk?
 “Can you taste Him or can you feel?”

The guide shook his head but said not a word,
 Just continued to quietly pray;
And he ne'er lost his faith or wavered the least,
 Though this went on day after day.

Each day the guide prayed and the atheist scorned,
 Though nothing else passed in between;
'Till the seventh day of the hunting trip,
 When there came a slight change in the scene.

The old guide got up as in all other days,
 Found a place and knelt down in prayer;
And as all other days when he got to his feet,
 The atheist was standing there.

His face slightly pale in an odd sort of way,
 In his eyes was a slight tinge of fright;
When he spoke it came in a nervous tone,
 " 'Twas a bear outside my tent last night."

The guide gave a smile, "Are you sure 'twas a bear,
 "Outside your tent as you say?
"Did you see him?" he asked and the atheist said "No,
 "Did you hear him?" Again he said "Nay."

"Well you smelled him I'm sure," said the guide with a smile;
 Again the man shook his head;
"Well I'm sure that you touched him," the man answered "No,"
 "I was sleeping all night in my bed."

"You didn't see him," the guide said with a smile,
 "You didn't smell or feel;
"You didn't hear or taste a bear,
 "So how do you know it was real?"

Now the atheist was grinning, "That's easy," he said,
 And slowly raised his hand;
To point to a place beside the tent,
 "Can't you see his tracks in the sand?"

The old guide looked up to the red of the dawn,
 And the moon fading back out of sight;
Then his gaze drifted off to a valley below,
 And away to the mountain's height.

The beauty he saw was too great for words,
 No work of art could compare;
"You ask me how I know my God is real.
 "Can't you see his footprints out there?"

"I know God is real, for all that I see,
 "Speaks of a power above;
"And all of creation that you and I see,
 "Are just a trace of His love.

"And more real yet than all that we see,
 "What is not seen in poems or art;
"Those traces of love that we see all around,
 "Are small, next to His love in my heart."

The atheist was stunned as he groped for a word,
 Yet found nothing that he could say;
And of all the bright scholars he'd met in his life,
 He'd found one of the wisest that day.

All that we think or know in our head,
 And all that we may write or say;
Profits us nothing unless we're aware,
 Of God's presence among us today.

THE DEATH OF A POET

The lights were growing dimmer,
As I laid my pent to rest;
After years of writing poetry,
Some of which were the best.

With a weak but steady hand,
I put my notebook by my bed;
And settled back in crisp, clean sheets,
A feather pillow 'neath my head.

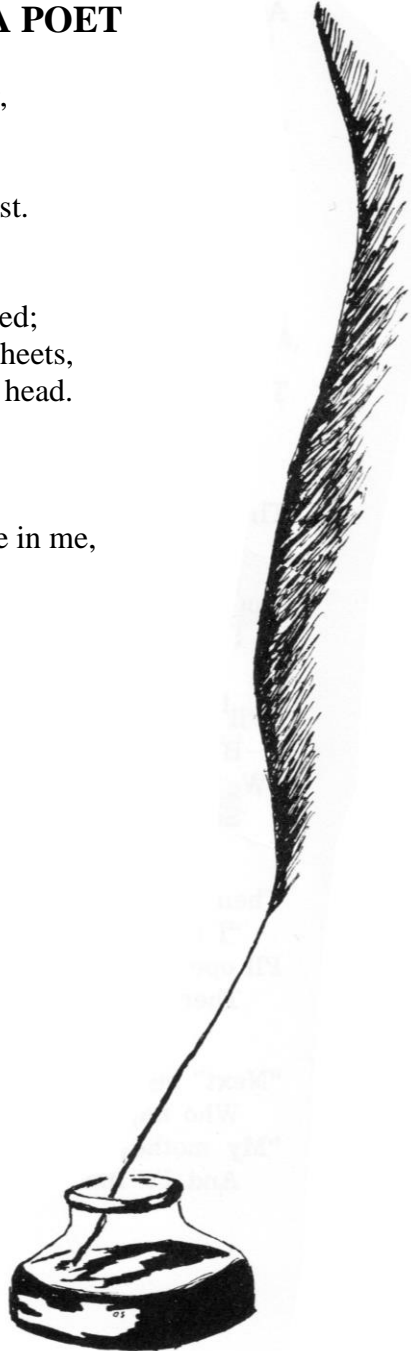
Music sounded distantly,
In a soft and mellow tone;
As the God who breathed His life in me,
Called my spirit home.

Above my head and at my bed,
I heard the world weep;
For it knew not or little thought,
That I was but asleep.

The body that I left behind,
Was rested in a tomb;
As my spirit, no released,
Traveled on for home.

Ahead I saw a line of people,
Standing before a gate;
So until my turn would come,
I settled down to wait.

First a rich man cried to Peter,
"Bid me enter the door,
"After all, think of the money,
"I've given to the poor."



“Yea,” cried Peter to him then,
 “I know you’re a man of great wealth;
“And for every dollar you gave away,
 “You kept a thousand for yourself.”

“A selfish man you are indeed,
 “You gave only enough to be known;
“But admission here can not be bought,
 “So into the pit you’ll be thrown.”

Next came a man with a smile on his face,
 And he spoke with a lawyer’s tongue;
Telling Peter of the men he had helped,
 And all the good things he had done.

Then said Saint Peter, “We live by faith,
 “Not of works lest a man should boast;
“You gave from your mind, but not from your heart,
 ““So Satan will be your host.”

A little boy with a dog by his knee,
 Bowed his head as he neared Peter’s side;
“We were hit by a car while walking to church,
 ““So kind sir, please let us inside.”

Then I saw Peter smile and his voice grew soft,
 “I can see that your hears are pure;
“I’ll open the door for you to get in,
 ““There’s room for you, I’m sure.”

“Next,” he cried, and there stood a girl,
 Who had crowded in from the rear;
“My mother loved God while she lived on Earth,
 ““And I’d like to meet her here.”

“But,” said Saint Peter, “your life on Earth,
“Was one of evil and sin;
“Your mother’s deeds won’t count for you now
“So I can’t let you in.”

Now my turn had come and I looked up,
“I’m only a poet,” I cried;
Saint Peter smiled down and the next thing I knew,
Heaven’s gates were opened wide.

“Why?” asked the rich man, “should he go in,
“He left the poor no gold?”
“But,” said Saint Peter, “The poems he wrote,
“Are gems with wealth untold.

“He had no life to call his own,
“His was given to writing rhymes;
“And when all of your money has passed away,
“You’ll still find his wise old lines.

“A poet is different from all other men,
“As the lines on his tombstone declar;
“Her lies a poet, he belonged to the world,
“Now his memory is left us to share.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Doug Sterner is a prolific author who has been writing for more than 50 years. He wrote his first poem in 1958 in his third grade classroom, and continued to write poetry throughout most of his school years. He self-published some of these in his first book titled “In the Master’s Hand”, in 1971 while he was serving in Vietnam.



Following his military service he transitioned to writing music, authoring more than 200 Gospel songs, 19 of which he recorded in two record albums in 1980 and 1982. As a recognized military historian, he has authored more than 60 non-fiction and three fiction works over the last four decades.

In preparing his first published book for re-publication 48 years later, his biggest challenge was in resisting the temptation to edit and modify his earliest writings.

This re-print of “In the Master’s Hand” is almost identical in content, art, and layout to the original. The poetry reflects both his self-imposed challenge to experiment and broaden his style, while reflecting both his love of nature in his native Montana, and his deep personal faith.

