

Victory

A chapbook of poems by

Henry Burt Stevens



HMS Victory

Victory

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author thanks the Brown Pelican Press
For permission to reprint the following poems from
“Word Dancers, the Poets of Southwest Florida”
Brown Pelican Press 2003

“Burger King, Sunday Morning, Ft Myers, Florida”

“OX”

“Deertracks”

The author thanks Quest, the monthly publication of
the CLF UU, for permission to reprint

“Deertracks”

Published by

Vico Press

A subsidiary of Vico Video

Revised May 18, 2004

Dedicated to Carol Mahler

Table of contents

Victory	7	Flag	45
Surrender	8	Gatekeepers	47
Observation	9	Grain of Sand	
Mystic Vision	10	Mary	50
The gift	11	May C Stevens	51
What about	12	Plan	52
OX	14	Promise	54
Poor Folk	15		
Mighty Leader	16		
Words	18		
Skin	19		
Time's Prison	20		
Crystal City	21		
Bill Maisel	22		
Burger King	24		
Deer Tracks	25		
We Sat as Four	26		
Family Life	28		
St Paddy's Day	30		
Disturbing	31		
Hard Ends	32		
Love song	34		
12-21	35		
Apart	36		
Arthur	38		
Beverly	39		
Cecil Broome	41		
Club of two	44		

Victory

Blood runs red from any color skin
and ancient man in victory
feasts on the vanquished, drinks his blood.

Stronger now, empowered,
the sated victor wields sticks and stones
to murder and feast on other foes.

Not every foe is weak and falls
and so the mighty are feasted upon
by younger, stronger, craftier in turn.

But victory is needed, victory over death
so mankind has the blood and flesh
of Jesus Christ to drink and eat.

Who can refuse Life Everlasting?
Sit at the right hand eat flesh,
drink the dark red blood of God.

Those who refuse should be killed
quickly so their blood and flesh
may burn in hell for eternity.

Surrender

surrender
nothing to do

surrende
no place to go

surrend
right here now

surren
this moment

surre
there is nothing to fear

surr
be calm

sur
be patient

su
just observe

s
if otherwise i would have told you so

Observation

When a child I
often lay face
down in grass
staring deeply
at what was there.

Looking carefully as
grass blades
emerged from dirt.

Little bugs would
sometimes enter then
wander out of sight.

Later, rolling over
I would watch
clouds, until standing
up to see
fields and trees.

From very small
and close
to far and very large
I learned about
observing all about me

Mystic Vision

My mind's eye carries a vision
of all the shamans
from the beginning of time
to the present day
joining hands in an
immense ring-around-the-rosie.

In the center of the ring
a ball of light
so bright
that none can look at it,
none can tell about it.

One day each of us
will get to see
the shining ball of light
right up close.

It will not hurt our eyes
we will not be afraid
we move closer and closer
until becoming one.

The gift

the gift has already
been received

it is each breath
each moment

reach out to
another person

sharing gifts
with yours

the gift is here
the gift is now
the gift is us

and one another.

What about

What about the bird songs
human ears can't hear?
Songs of joy and rapture
pitched way above our ear.

What about the other colors
human eyes can't see?
Brighter waves and motions
unseen by you and me.

What about the many thoughts
we'll never ever think?
Because they're way beyond us
not spoken or in ink.

This unknown world, like ours
is true and really there.
But just because we're numb
is it less good and fair?

That which we cannot know
bedevils us for sure.
And so we make a story
for ills we cannot cure.

Do our pretty sayings
affect what really is?
Funny clothes and chanting
change answers on the quiz?

What's wrong with patient waiting
Looking being in the eye?
Happy with today tomorrow
adventures till we die.

OX

So many years I've spent
training this OX to walk
straight along the path.

Earlier was near impossible
his running and wandering
were almost constant.

But lately he walks slower
much steadier and not
so far ahead of me.

Poor Folk

There's no place for
the poor folk to hide

There's no place for
them to go

They're all around us
with their faces hanging out
waiting in the snow.

Our Mighty Leader

Our Mighty Leader
stood before us all
and said,
"You are with us
or against us."

A mighty cheer
went up from the
with us

The against us
covered

As the with us
pushed the against
us from the land
into the sea

"Swim to France
you SOB's"

Then Our Mighty Leader
stood before us all remaining
and said "You are with us
or against us."

Again a mighty cheer
went up and all the
with us adjourned

To apple pie, Motherhood
patriotism and baseball.

Words

on any day there's
somewhere war
division at it's very worst

gunpowder's the ace of choice
in its multiple forms
and calibers

used by single lone deranged
raged into groups
whole nations

united in separating
human bodies perforated
bleeding losing parts blown asunder
arms legs toes and heads

if only words could have
the power of gunpowder.

Skin

Shades of skin color
make so much difference

We must count them
and compile a score

Because we've been
doing it right along

We can't stop now;
it's for the programs

Yes, it's foolish but
intermarriage may fade

Again white will be white
and black will be black

If not, then we can count
eye shape, eye color.

Time's Prison

Tomorrow never comes
it's always today
busy-ness crowding every moment
with anticipation of better times
those long sweet daisy chains
of happy dreams.

But then changes
some so quickly
some barely noticed
till suddenly the clock
seems to stop

In that slow tick
lives the ogre of time
when slow has
overcome fast
and hope leaves to
live somewhere else

Grayness spreads days
to years
eternity comes early
only broken by a voice
or letter from those
active and cogent

Crystal City

As a bald eagle flies higher to see farther
my vision soars to search for Crystal City.

Shimmering sights soar before me
an immense construction being built.

Every added crystal flashes facets
sending sunlight to the edge of distant darkness.

The brightness alone causes me to shudder
as a quick cold wind on summer skin.

Soon, mist like cataracted eyes dismisses all
and lands me on my feet again.

But I remember crystal fragments, sparkle chips,
and thrill again, pressing for another view.

Someday, all Crystal City
will be explored, mapped, known,
by those who follow over many million years.

Bill Maisel 1919- 2003

“My hidden desire would be to arrive unannounced where the old band was having a practice session and I could just listen. You know, some of the fellows had really developed a sweet sound.”

wheel chaired of partial mind
Big Band leader of long ago
recited to me, his friend,
what four saxophones
two trumpets
one trombone
set of drums
piano
and female vocalist
could "Tuxedo Junction"
"How High The Moon"
sweet sounds..

hundreds of gigs, clubs
formal dances, benefit
balls, graduations.
‘they played the sweet sounds.

I wondered at what
sweet sound now played in
his mind which didn't
know what he just had
for lunch.

I remember
being younger
Dorsey, James, Miller
I once saw in concert
Ella Fitzgerald
with Louis Armstrong
and thrilled to hear,
which I don't do
so well anymore

when I no longer
remember the sweet sounds
where will they be?

Burger King

“At Burger King, Midday Sunday,
Ft Myers, Florida”

Moving slowly not
to spoil their raiment

moving calmly
still otherworldly,

they do not see any of us
white, brown, or black

sitting with our families
eating burgers and fries,

though they smile gently
to one another.

We know who we are
and why we are not seen.

If it happens while
we're all together

we'll see them taken up
leaving us behind

but for now the saved
have joined with us for lunch.

Deer Tracks

Rain softened mud
showed clear deer tracks
where mother and little one
earlier crossed my path.

One set larger
the other smaller
wandering back and forth
among the steadier, larger.

I stopped, stooped and
placed my two vee spread fingers
in one of the tracks
feeling close to deerness.

The next rain will flatten
all the mud again, erasing
these sharp fresh prints forever
without a trace or commemoration.

I stood and suddenly
realized that my foot prints will
suffer same, everyone's will
but it was all right,

better, at once
I was free, unfettered.
I walked along
counting it my great day.

We Sat as Four

"First visit with my sister-in-law
since my brother's death."

We sat as four, myself
my wife, my sister-in-law
my nephew's mother-in-law

Eating fine food
shrimp, crab from the sea
cheese, probably from Italy

Crisp salad from California
with dressings from
who knows where.

We talked of all
the blandest things

How long to drive from here
to there, a few days future plans,
my wife's sore foot.

As quickly as it started
it was over
We hugged goodbye and
hoped to see each other
again in a year, or more.

Unsaid, unasked was
why their G-d punished
my brother so.
Why held and suffered at
death's door for years
before he died.

What was his crime,
and why the price?

Their faith, their G-d has
answers for all that happens
surely they could have
told me.

When we sit four again
next year
I'll be sure to ask.

Family Life

he shoved her
she hit him
he hit her
she bit him

after a few weeks
it happened again
only this time
she didn't mark him

she called the cops
the cops came, looked
took him away
booked him into jail

in the home
her daughter 5
their daughter 2
witness and wait

she feeds and cleans them
but who washes their eyes
who cleans their ears
who erases noise and violence

they wonder where daddy is
they color and play
with their bible toys
knowing Jesus loves them

weeks later daddy comes home
everything is clean, nothing happened
he hugs the girls
all is serene

but it happens again
shouts screams
he push she push
cops come, take daddy

and the little girls
will never forget forever

St Paddy's Day

"Another Irishman has died"

St. Paddy's day
by Peace River shore
bands, beer and booze

between every set
"A toast, a toast,"
the MC cried

but I started to cry
because I knew how
alcohol plagued my family

a mixture of wet and dry folks
and how the wet teased the dry
who outlived the wet.

one day my brother sneered
"If you can't drink before noontime
you're not a Stevens"

followed by cirrhosis death
and a daughter who at 33
nearly did the same

some are able to beat the booze
while others die and lose

Distrubing

To learn that
most of what we think
just really isn't so

most of what we believe
is imagination snarled with
emotion and dreams

What's really going on is
not affected by our thoughts, though we'd
like to think it's so

falsehoods learned from
parenthood which we pass
on to childhood

How can thought
bend the universe
and make it to our liking
so we may blessed be?

Hard Ends

My grandmother knew
how to make it work
slash both wrists at
the same time and lie
down on the kitchen floor

For years she'd threatened
her son and daughter
"Stop, do as I say
or I'll kill myself"

My father's business
partner sat in the
barn doors of the high drive
with a shotgun across
his lap for weeks on end
till one day he swallowed
the muzzle with his toe
on the trigger

One day, walking to school
at 8 o'clock in the morning
I saw a man swinging
by his neck from the top
back porch of the three decker
that housed the Post Office

The law's against it and
it's a taboo too
in the military it's a
court martial offense,
misusing government property

The final act of personal
protest, an ultimate act
of personal freedom

taking prisoners for life
of those left behind whose
pain will just begin.

Lovesong of D.M.C.

wounded, so young, so pretty
harboured, with chile
in my mother's house
both hiding from
the abusive one

pretty, whose first love
brought so much pain
that caused you to flee
secreted nearby

can flight be yours again
to love and live with me
raise up this lovely seed
whose father we both fear

with seeds of our own love
we pray will soon appear
hurt one, known only pain
from love

now turn to me

can i, a child of love gone wrong
raised fatherless be father
to another's child
along with my very own?

12-21

Being a teen is hell
pressure, questions all the time,
answers scarce changing

push me pull me
punch me kick me
why am I always wrong
and they are always right?

If I write a novel
with my pictures
about a serial killer
and turn it in at school
I'll get expelled
sent to the school shrink
profiled by the cops.

If a retired police officer
writes about a serial killer
he's expressing art.

But the biggest bummer
is no one will listen to me
I would just like to talk
without being advised,
corrected, put down
ratted on, walked away from--
Isn't there anyone who will just listen?
I'll be happy when I am twenty-two.

Apart

When he dropped the microphone
the cord and mike flew apart.
Leaving them aside,
he continued speaking.

in contrast many of
the brothers and sisters
are disconnected
and not speaking

yes, they appear to
speak, but their ears
hear only words
agreeable to themselves

their hearts are nulled
to any difference
of thought or practice
labeling it negatively

one large disconnect
concerns whether,
are we created?
are we an unfolding mystery?

should we learn about
what is going on?
should we read the book
and wait for revelation?

do we merely
cancel out one another?
with conclusive faith
contesting evidence?

what can we do
to open our
hearts and ears
to benefit us all?

Arthur

Arthur shuffles towards the door
his 80 years have hurt his body so,
holding tightly his companion's hand
they walk out to the street.

He sees and hears even though
his mind now only processes
body instructions; digestion
heartbeat, temperature and like.

Earlier his mind filled an office wall
with diplomas and certifications,
his body fascinated three wives
as well as winning sports trophies.

Now the shadow of his passing footsteps
expresses what is left of him
while ahead darkness will hide
those shadows and he will be no more.

Beverly

"Beverly bottle feeds her 9-day-old
great-grandson
in a public place while I approach
to chat and look".

She shows me his long fingers
"A pianist," I say,
"That's what his great-grandfather says."

I wonder if the baby heard
and learned music while he was
still aboard his water vessel?

Perhaps his mother played
music on the radio
or a cable TV music channel?

Was his very uncluttered
developing mind picking up
on musical sounds?

Now docked in outer space
to seek air and water on his own,
the music is closer and louder

clearer too, for his ears and mind
to process what he hears
and plan his own response.

For now, he's a baby busy being
baby with long fingers
and a long future.

Cecil Angus Broome Jr (SSG/ARMY)
Sep 05, 1933 to May 26, 1966

Cecil, we never learned
a goddammed thing.
Today's headlines are
about increasing troop strength

Only this time Iraq
instead of Vietnam.
But all the body bags
stink the same.

"May 26, 1966 hostile
ground casualty
gun small arms fire
Body was recovered"

"Panel 07E--Line 110",
but your homecoming
to Lancaster NH was
the biggest event in years.

Cecil, we're still led
by hypocrites.
Nixon promised
to end the war with honor.

In 1968 he spoke at
Grinell School, Derry NH
where I listened and
later voted for him.

He tricked us all,
no peace instead
napalm-cremating people alive
and destroying villages to save them.

Then the invasion of Cambodia
massive bombing
followed by withdrawal
leaving our allies to be massacred.

Now we have Iraq-nam
a high tech war.
No civilian casualties are counted,
No body bags are met at Dover AFB

We're in this war for reasons
as ephemeral as Bay of Tonkin
But this time g-d is on our
side and W is his spokesman.

What we were told was there
isn't there and it looked like
oil might have been the ace
but no, 'tis a Christain endeavor.

Cecil, you are safe now
on that long black wall
while humanity waits
patiently for the hit you took.

Club of two

This thing we do each morning
rise and look in each other's eyes
will soon be more than 50 years.

Will we, like those
who burn a paid mortgage
tear up the license we no longer need?

Our little club of two
briefly joined by three
grown up and gone.

Now on our own again
among the rocks and rapids
we keep our craft afloat.

We don't need a high rocky ledge
to view ahead, we only guide
on glances, the touch of hands.

Flag

Not moving, not dancing
lying very still
now a coverlet
a decoration
for remains forever static.

The starred blue square
marks the head
although we do not know
or ask if there is a head inside.

The red white stripes
point to the feet
as in patrol, platoon
squad and squadron.

Do not look or note
or photograph these flags
covering metal boxes
it's unpatriotic.

Do not recite the names
of what the remains were called
as it aids the enemy
is an intrusion on family grief.

Do explain to the children
especially the very young ones
why flags are gleefully everywhere
when starting the war.

But now we do not look at
or think about
flags on metal boxes.

Gatekeepers

"Did you ever meet a tenured
activist?" -V. Ideo

The gatekeepers
are vulnerable
though they pretend
to stay in control.

They and government
will team together
to hide or fake
the fact

The usual lies and cons
the threat of taxes
and permits
fading, fading away

Now endplays
appearing all over
the earth available
by the internet

Instant information
words and video
allow little people
to break out of line

Their ranks will
swell and the
gatekeepers
can go to hell.

Grain of sand

A grain of sand
centuries before me
centuries after me.

more significant
than my whole life.

knowing this is my freedom

Mary

Unfit, Mary Marconi
sits alone, head bowed
while the fit edge forward
to receive the sacrament.

Divorced, alone,
Mary thinks about her
annulled remarried husband
while crying softly.

Mary watches the lines
form, receive, and disperse
knowing the lines in
her face have been her downfall.

Devout, caring, believing
her marriage secure
until young smooth skin
broke the holy matrimony.

Now, unequivocally
trapped by church law
she cannot change,
Mary is unfit forever.

May C Stevens, voyager

Riverlets of rain crease spring mud
while I walk, collar up brim down
soaking through

Wondering if my mother will
live till dandelions
spot lawns again

She'd rallied
many times before

confounding hospice nurses

Ever cheerful, always kind
without complaints-
"I'm doing fine"

Her certainty at
joining dad
defies my doubt

Though I'd like
to join her
marble faith

Her head stone waits
needing only flowers
and dates

Plan

finding a well balanced stick
i drew a triangle
on the sharp lowtide sand

the apex i named surrender
losing all hope
letting go of all beliefs

the left point was
labeled love, strong
positive emotion of regard and affection

the right remaining point was
named compassion, the
deep awareness for another's suffering

together the pictured plan
invoked in me a feeling of
freedom and release

sighing, yet smiling
i wandered off
down the beach

my steps lightened
i stood straighter
care lessened

i wondered if
anybody else
saw my plan?

Promise

Any more it doesn't matter
the stars will arc forever
while this random
chemical development
I pinch and pull
will blink and disappear.

Redemption?

For What?—Nothing happened.
An illusion, narcissist
folded inward till
it equals minus zero

I pick my teeth with
a fractured sliver
of dinosaur leg bone
and spit a couple hundred million years
against the rage of wind
while waiting till the sun cools down
and the eternity of night that follows.

You say you'll wait for the new dawn?

Henry Stevens is retired and often thinks about poetry.



Henry B Stevens
6400 Taylor Rd Unit 108
Punta Gorda FL 33950

Email hank330@hotmail.com

Use “Victory Chapbook” in the subject line so that I know to move your email out of the junk mail. I really do want to hear from you. henry

