



## What Readers Are Saying:

*“In his Foreword to *Collected Poems*, Justin Spring says, ‘Given the unpredictability of things at age seventy-five, I thought it would be wise to put together my *Collected Poems* if for no other reason than to show my children I haven’t been wasting my time. Here, finally, would be proof of a certain kind of serious industry.’*

To my mind no statement about his life could be more ironic. As you will see when you read *Collected Poems*, the best poems are true stories from his life, all of which, no matter how ordinary seeming, are imbued with an intensity only possible from an observer who loves life. Love of life (the terror, the violence, the magic—both real and imaginary) is the subject of every poem. It is Spring’s gift to the reader.

**To my mind, Justin Spring is our greatest living poet. Among poets who are dead I might compare him to Philip Larkin or perhaps Robert Lowell.** The language is natural, the words energizing, the stories compelling. I have read these poems many times but keep on coming back to them. I am happy that he has finally decided to make them available to the public. I look forward to reading them again, and again, and again.”

*Jim Anton, Publisher, Muse Press*

“Reading Justin Spring’s *Collected Poems* is like bumping into a great raconteur at the local pub on a Tuesday night. Inside the circle of light these poems make is the easy intimacy of strangers sharing a moment, nursing their fourth beer. Part memory, part myth, these are the stories of a life in motion, the reflections of a man looking into the mirror of every shiny

surface he passes on the street. If Justin's tone leans toward the conversational and the mundane, **his words aim for a spiritual center with poems that are tender, human and irrepressibly alive. Insightful, melancholy, funny and always surprising, there is a core of pure joy in this book.**"

*Silvia Curbelo, poet; author of Falling Landscape and The Secret History of Water.*

**"Justin Spring's poetry can take you by surprise, with its casual rhythms and sly rhymes. He's a man of many moods and many voices. But it's the power beneath the lines that is stunning. His observant gaze regularly hits the bull's eye dead on.** What a pleasure to read, savor and digest these unique poems written over the decades."

*Victoria Sullivan, Poet Laureate of the Woodstock Roundtable WDST radio.*

**"Justin Spring's poetry always affects me in a physical way: tears, laughter, body heat.** His ear for the rhythm and diction of ordinary speech is extraordinary, as is his highly visual eye. When I am reading his poems I always have the sense he is speaking to me in a simple, familiar way and yet—and here's the trick—that same easy-going speech has a magical way of transforming the ordinary into the truly luminous."

*Joan Adley (Adora) , Author, Poet, Intuitive*

“Justin Spring’s poems have moved me since I began reading them over 23 years ago and I have pretty much read everything he has written. My favorite poems include: *The Poet Visits Alachua Baptist High*, *Bogie*, *Mrs. Taliferro*, *Stolen Poems*, *Panama Journal/The Courtyard*. **Justin’s poems are small narrative journeys that are sharp and crisp. In the best of them, the imagery unfolds in your mind and then gives you a little kick somewhere down deep.** You may recognize yourself in a poem, maybe not. But you should recognize an exceptional poet when you read him.”

*Scylla Liscombe, Poet, Dancer, Artist*

I met Justin Spring through my mother Alice Hickey about fifteen years ago. I hadn’t read his poetry at the time, but she told me she thought it was quite special, so when I had a chance recently to read his *Collected Poems*, it only took me a few minutes to see how accurate my mother’s judgment had been. **This is an extraordinary book by an extraordinary poet. The thing I like best about his poetry is that I can actually hear him speaking to me when I read his poems—that’s how close to the bone it is**—but as easy and familiar as his manner may be, there is something almost unearthly about the way he can suddenly take you to a place you’ve never been before.

*Christopher Hickey, Writer, Biographer of Alice Hickey*

## **OTHER BOOKS BY JUSTIN SPRING**

### PROSE

*SOULSPEAK: The Outward Journey of the Soul*

*MIRRORS: The Aborigine Poetry of Eldred Van-ooy*

*ALICE HICKEY: Between Worlds*

*RIVER MOTHER: The Face of the Sphinx*

### POETRY

*Polaroid Poems*

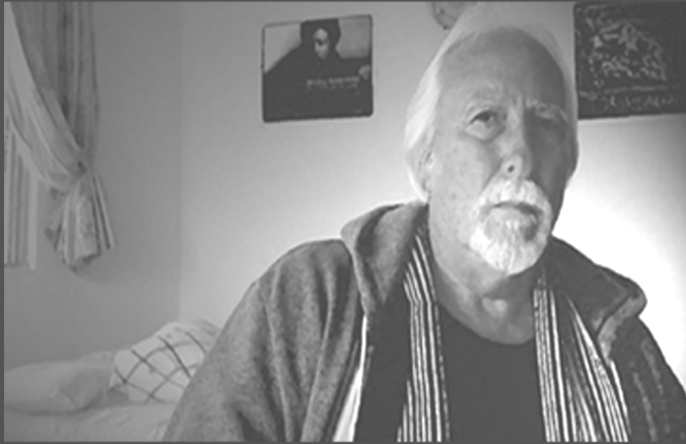
*Other Dancers*

*Nursery Raps*

*Talkies*

*Poems for Family and Friends*

*Poems of Sarasota and Florida*



COLLECTED POEMS

1985-2014

JUSTIN SPRING

**A SOULSPEAK E-BOOK**

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**Note: This version corrects any pre-existing typographical errors**



## SNOW ANGELS

I was six. No, five, I was five: my first snow.  
I remember the angel suddenly coming together  
and then bleeding out beneath me  
like I was turning myself inside out,  
and then I remember awakening  
to a white field, because the angels  
were always a surprise to me,  
the way they kept falling in such  
peculiar positions, like someone  
screaming, or dying. Like the wings.  
Friends would take me aside,  
tell me the wings were a bit too much:  
Like a Babylonian lion's, really.  
Those wings, they'd say.  
They were right of course,  
but what could I say to them except  
I couldn't help it, that my arms  
always moved up and down like that  
whenever I fell out of heaven.  
Sometimes I felt like telling them  
maybe it would help  
if they thought of the angels  
as small relief-maps of my soul,  
sudden, uncontrolled curdlings  
that occurred whenever I stopped,  
opened myself to the sun, or the moon.  
And then there were times  
I didn't know what to say, except  
maybe they should think of the angels  
as detailed descriptions of another life.  
A life I was living but knew nothing about.

**For Pauline**

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## FOREWORD COLLECTED POEMS 1985-2014

Given the unpredictability of things at age seventy-five, I thought it would be wise to put together my Collected Poems if for no other reason than to show my children I haven't been wasting my time. Here, finally, would be proof of a certain kind of serious industry.

I also wanted to get more of my poems into the Library of Congress which has an idiotic rule against chapbooks, which is how most of my collections were initially published as prizewinners.

Although critics don't like poets altering their poems after publication, I couldn't care less. After all, critics are like overage stepfathers who never really get a good handle on the obstreperous children they inherit.

Poets like myself, however, are more like mothers, and I can assure you I am the kind of mother who never stops checking out the appearance of my off-spring—even after they're married, and yes, even after they're turning gray and puffy.

I would like to think that my poems are absolutely perfect before I let them out into the world. Occasionally, however, one of the little devils will manage to get out of the house in a somewhat disheveled state. How that happens I have no idea. Perhaps I should be more suspicious when they line up at the door for final inspection. *Love is blind*, isn't it?

I don't have to tell you how difficult it is trying to get them back in the house for a touch up once they're out in the world. Every once in a while I'll look out my kitchen window and catch one of them racing down the street

with everything hanging out, a situation that pains me beyond words.

Until now there was little I could do about this because I had no way of getting them off the streets. Well, all those bad boys are back in the house now thanks to this collection and I can assure you that when I'm finished with them, they'll be perfect. Finally.

One final note. I have entered the various collections in the order of their writing and not their publication.

Justin Spring  
Sarasota Florida  
2015



**NEW SECTION: POLAROID POEMS**

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