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Through

The

Years

A Selection of Poetry & Prose

By

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Through The Years

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Introduction

This is the third book of poetry that I have written, and published over the last 40 years or so. Those of you who have read either of my previous books – 'Just Me' (1971) and "Through The Windmills of my mind" (1983) will recognise several of the pieces in this book, along with some relatively new pieces with a link to the World Wide Web and the Internet.

I have used the word published. That however, is just a dream. What it *does* mean is that I wrote, typed, proof read, retyped, printed and photo copied them and put them into folders myself. That means you wont find any of my books on library shelves, not just yet.

Over the years, both readers and critics of my work have all come up with the same question, albeit phrased in different ways – and that is – 'Where do you find your inspiration'? Well I could have used that old cliché that says 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration; but that would not be true. I actually find it a close to home.

My inspiration comes from something that breaths, from something that has nothing to do with culture or religion, class or creed. I find my inspiration in LIFE itself. Let me explain.

In any one day of anyone's life, they will have to face a whole myriad of feelings and

emotions, and deal with them in their own unique way.

Emotions such as love and joy. The same feelings that I had when holding my newborn son for the first time; the way I feel when a stranger smiles at me, or my boss gives me a compliment; the emotions I have on receiving a letter from a dear but distant friend.

On the other side of the coin you have those not so nice, but oh so necessary emotions, for you cant have sunshine without rain. Emotions such as anger – the sort you feel when you come across cruelty to animals or humans; your reaction when you have spent twenty minutes in a Post Office queue and it closes just as you reach the front; or how you feel when you come across injustice, stupidity or ignorance.

One emotion that you will come across in my poetry, is loneliness. That feeling of desolation, of wanting to belong to someone. somehow, somewhere. However, you will also find humour, honesty, truth, understanding, confusion, betrayal and many, many more emotions that I don't have a name for or room enough to print them all.

A Poet can be likened to an Artist. An artist will often paint something that he sees or has seen, in the hope that those that view his work might somehow share in the emotions he felt as he painted the piece. A Poet - paints pictures with words.

I hope you find pleasure, perhaps a hidden memory, and maybe a better understanding of me, in what you are about to read.

Allan D Stewart
Milton Keynes – December 2005

1

This first piece, though not actually poetry, demands a place in every book I write. It was first written over thirty five years ago, when I was a young and inexperienced sailor joining my very first ship. As I settled down that first night, although I was surrounded by many other's, boys and men, some probably feeling just as I was - I felt so alone. Everything was so different, there was no familiarity around me. I was alone. I was heading for pastures new and places I had only dreamt about.

A lot of water has passed under the keels since then, and as time passed by, a few more lines were added to this piece of prose - but...this is exactly what it was at that time - a dedication to two wonderful loving people that were.....”

Always There

As the ship sailed out of the harbour, and into the wide blue yonder; I felt the first pangs, of loneliness, that strange feeling of being homesick. For the first time in my life I was alone, or as alone as one can be on a ship with a crew of 2000 ,but to me I felt alone. And I was alone; alone to make my own decisions; alone to follow my own path in life; alone to stand on my own two feet.

Prior to that time in my life I had, I must admit; taken my parents for granted... for whenever I had needed them; they had always been there, both for me, and for my

seven brothers and one solitary sister.

They were there when -as a very young child; I had stolen a ride on the tow bar of an Ice Cream Van, had fallen off, and had received a bruised head, and an even bigger bruised ego.

They were there throughout my childhood. In times of illness a comforting hand - In times of sorrow, a shoulder to cry on - In times of anger, understanding.

They were there, even in absence. My father was so often serving his country far away at sea, yet his love and presence were forever there with us.

They were there, in times of pain, and sorrow, and hope. My mother, so dangerously ill after a major operation - The doctors could do no more - Only the will to live; to return home to her loving husband and loving family that needed her so much, saved the world, and us, from a tragic loss.

They were there. Each and every time I fell in and out of love - Each time vowing that this would be the last time. They were there to share in the joy of the birth of my son - and then in the death of my marriage. There to help me pick up the pieces, and start all over again. Twice.

They were there, as each of us grew, in size and stature. There, as each met, courted and married, and had children of their own. There to help, to guide, and to love each grandchild, as a child of their own.....

Some may think, and I have even heard some say; that now we are all grown up, we don't need Mum and Dad anymore - that we are Mums and Dads ourselves. I cannot agree - No matter how old we grow, how rich we become, we will >>>>> always need them. I believe that we should let them live these, their twilight hours, in harmony and peace; but I still have my memories, and I still have their love, and if they ever need me, I truly hope that I will always be there, for them.

As I said at the beginning of this piece - this dedication was first written many years ago, and has been added to as the years passed by. Sadly, my beloved mother passed away some years ago, it was such a tragic loss, she was an Angel without wings. Thank God I still have my Dad. A saint without halo, A father, a friend and a mate all rolled into one. For him, I **will always be there.**

2

***There** have been many times in my life, when I have felt so very alone - times when I would have given anything just to have a friend - a friend just to talk to- ...a friend to help and guide me in my hour of need. In time, I found such friends. If **you** should ever need someone, please remember these words....."*

WHEN

When you reach out your hand...
but find nobody there.
When your feeling so alone and so sad...
and in deep despair.
When you really need a friend.....

I will be there.

When your mind is so full of confusion
and your heart is so full of doubt.
When you feel that you are being used....
And need to talk it out.
When you need a friend just shout
And - I will be there.

When the dreams you had planned
no longer seem very real.
When you feel that life itself
has dealt you a rough deal.
When your heart is full of such pain
that time alone can never heal.
I will be there

Though I cannot promise you an answer
to everything.
I will try to ease your suffering.
I can help by understanding
the way that you feel.....
Those dark secret thoughts
that you dare not reveal.

I can offer you guidance, in time of need.
I can show you the way. .but never lead.
I can offer you time, compassion and care;
But...most of all....
I will always be there.

"This next piece is the shortest in the entire book, yet it describes exactly what this book contains – my thoughts – which – along with my emotions , create the backbone to every poem"

Thoughts

Thoughts.
They fill our minds a million times of a day.
They are the prompters of all that we do or say.
They are the building blocks of memories and dreams.
They are a necessary part of life it seems.
They can be joyful or happy – sorrowful or sad.
They can be deep or fleeting – good and bad.....
They are our own, yet so very often of others...
...strangers, friends, sisters or brothers.

They help us to read and to understand
They nurture the hopes and the dream we have planned
From the moment we take our very first breath

And even beyond, some believe, our death.

Thoughts.

They have been here beside me every day of my life....

This book - contains but a few.

Thoughts from deep within my heart

That I would like to share - with you.

“ If I was asked to choose the one piece from all the poems that I have written, to signify my view of this world -it would be this one. It was originally written in the early 70's,when, as a young sailor; I was serving on a warship on coastal patrol in the Persian Gulf. These thoughts echoed my feelings at that time - and now reading it again I realize that *nothing much* has changed – and in my mind I can still hear the haunting words of.....”.

The Youth of Yesterday - The Old Man of Tomorrow

“What is thy purpose on the earth my son?
the Old Man asked of me –
as we stood on a cloud, high above the Earth
a warring, raging sea - of people.

As I thought on how best to answer him...
the stars in the heavens and the moon grew dim.
Yet, I could still faintly see the Old Mans face;
so full of love and compassion, for the human race
and so - I answered him.

“ In this hostile world of ours, Peace is just a word.
Often spoken of, .but never really heard.
This is a world where Ultimate Power is the aim of one and all
A world where nations rise, and just as swiftly fall.
A world where Strength and Winning is the name of the game
and with that comes Power, Glory and Fame
Where the loser, loses hope, loses faith. loses face -
Yet where the only real loser -is the human race.”
It is a world where to lose is wrong. and to win is always right.
If one is to be the strongest, one always has to fight.
No wonder its people find it so hard to unite.”

It is a world where religion, has caused many tragic wars
where brother will fight brother in the name of the cause
where Life and Death are decided behind closed doors
Where Peace -is just another word for a conflict pause
A world where each religion insists that God is on their side.
If so, what happened to the millions of people that died
Does any one really know -.can anyone ever tell...
Where did they go to, is there really; a Heaven or Hell?”
The Arabs, the Israelis, Ireland, North and South.
A gun in the hand and a prayer on the mouth.

Bombing - .Murdering - ...Devastation -
And we call ourselves a peace loving nation?"
My purpose on Earth, is. .to me, so very clear
Yet -...a rather impossible dream I fear....
But I will speak, and I will pray, that some will eventually hear
my words."

4

My aim is to bring unity, between class and creed..
in my actions - in my words - and in my every deed.
I will write, in the hope, that others may read.
To show people that Life really could be worth living...
if we were more caring; more loving and much more forgiving.
If we accepted that in life, we are not all the same.
Then - Peace could be more, than just a name.

Why should we care about the colour of a mans skin?
Surely what's more important is the soul that lies within?
What is so different between a Muslim and a Jew...
they both worship One God.....as most religions do?
What is so different about the way we offer our prayers?
be it kneeling on mats. .or sitting on chairs.

What difference if we worship in a synagogue
in a Mosque in our homes or in a Church?
If it is for the same purpose we pray and search....
for Peace on Earth; and Goodwill to all Mankind.
Or.....is true Religion...just a state of mind?
We are all Gods children -or so the Bible tells
So what is that lights the fuse, what is it that impels
men to kill and to maim, in the name of the Lord ?
By bombing, by missile by the gun or by the sword.

Is it Power, or Jealousy...or just plain Greed....
Wanting something from life; that we dont really need?

As I paused to consider on what else I had to say;
I looked up at the Old Man...- but he quickly looked away.
Yet not before I had seen, the tears in his eyes...
tears that he tried, but could not disguise
tears for the failure, of Gods Universal plan.
tears of blood, shed - for the stupidity of Man.

As I looked down, at the Earth far below...
an anger within me began to grow
So, I continued by saying-....I know...

that the task I have set myself is daunting indeed.
But someone has to start so that others may lead.
My greatest hope is - that I will one day, succeed.”
As I finished speaking, the light returned
and now I could clearly see, the Old Mans face;
but as I did so, my heart began to quicken
and my pulse began to race!

For it was then that I began to realize
With a sense of determination and sorrow -
that I was that Youth of Yesterday
and - ...the Old Man of Tomorrow.!!!

5

“This next poem, was written not so many years ago, a time when I was in a relationship, that might, or might not, head anywhere. My partner of the time had asked me to tell her, in writing, my true feelings about our relationship. This was my answer. This old and weary heart of mine, is scarred, with time and age.
Each love, a different story, Each romance, a different page...
in the Book of Life.

My Heart

It has shared the youthful experience of romance. Pure and new.
It has known the joy of tenderness -of love, sincere and true.
It has felt the emotion, and the happiness of the wondrous birth of a child.
The love, and the trust, of children - pure, and undefiled.

It has known the joy in sharing the love of colleagues and friends.
And touched the very heart Of a love, that never ends.

Yet -it has also faced the bitterness -and the heartache of divorce;
The tearing apart of life itself by some invisible force.

It has survived the anger, the bitterness and the pain
and the loneliness when one has to face
The loss of that special ‘someone’ who can never be replaced.
It has travelled to the very depths of despair;
When faith, and even faint hope, are gone.
It as also lost the will to live..... to try soldier on.

Yet somehow, it still beats on - it’s eternal rhythm of Life.
And time does dimmer the memories of sorrow and strife.
It awaits the day, when someone new
rekindles the flame - someone perhaps.... like you.

When joy and passion , and tenderness
are found in a smile - a tender caress.
When life is worth living -every moment of every day.

And so, my dearest friend - to you....this I say;

If your heart, and my heart should someday become entwined.
Before you actually tie the knot please bare this thought in mind.
If my heart should beat, for you, and you alone
with a love, that is so deep and so rare.
Please treat it, as you would, your own,
With tenderness, and with care.

You are probably sat reading this poem, in a comfortable chair in your comfortable home.
Now try to imagine what it would be like to be torn away from your family, your home,
your loved ones. Imagine what it must be like for a Sailor, or even the sailor's wife:

The Last Farewell

You remember that day, so clearly now.
The dockyard. The Jetty. The waiting ship.
The sadness. The sorrow. The trembling lip.
The kiss - that said "I love you, more than you will ever know...
And though it breaks my heart, I really have to go"
The hooting of the tugs as the ship pulled away.
The sky matching your every mood, now cloudy and grey.

Then – those first bitter moments of loneliness
As you remember his touch, his kiss, his caress.
But now – you are alone.
Alone to think. Alone to cry.
Alone to ask yourself...why?

6

Why was each parting such bitter sweet sorrow.
Why did he have to go away, again.
Who would be there for every tomorrow
To wipe away the tears that would fall like summer rain?
Were loneliness, and separation, just part of the price –
Of being a Sailor's wife?

As you slowly left the dockyard and made your way home –
A ship slipped out of the harbour and into the raging foam.
It's destination – who knows – somewhere near, or maybe far away.
It's duty, one that all sailors must obey.
To preserve the freedom of our homeland and sea.
You silently whispered a prayer – "Lord bring him back safely to me".
When you reach home, though the children are there –
The house seems so empty, so bleak and so bare.
Little Jimmy asks "Where's Daddy"
You reply – "He's gone away"
Silence. Then...."Why Mummy, didn't he want to stay"

Later that night with the children in bed and past asleep

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