



Thanks to my family of friends
whose deep thoughts and good example
stimulate my own

INTROSPECTION

Cover photo by C. Mullan

Birthday
7/16/00

Thanks Giving
11/00

One more time
Around the track
Gotta keep going
There's no turnin' back

One more season
I get to enjoy
Another chance to keep growin'
Into man from a boy

One more breathe
I deeply take
And pray the Lord(s)
My soul to a-wake

One more look
And opportunity to see
How incredibly blessed
One man can be

One more day
I managed to stay
More-or-less sober
In the important way(s)

One more moment
I appreciate now
Knowing what, when and why
But still learning how.

Life's purpose and meaning
Have a way of not seeming
As clear as we'd like it to be

But that's part of the delusion
Just another way of exclusion
By those who would choose not to see

Like desire and loss
Like rocks covered with moss
That which obscures is just a veneer

Just one more distraction
A chance for dis-satisfaction
Leading There instead of to Here

It's doing with and not for
Not living life as a chore
But rather simply as if that's our reason

Growing up, not just old
Bringing warmth to the cold
Finding renewal in the Thanks-Giving season

The joy of deep peace
Can only increase
Our capacity for giving and caring

The chance to savor our blessings
Like a spiced turkey dressing
Made better by the act of our sharing.

Goin' Home
4/16/02

Once more astride iron rails
Bit short on details
Relaxing at twice the price

Joining the commuters
Becoming one less polluter
Passing cars that are lines up like mice

I welcome the rest
And feel like a guest
Steady motion and not stop-and-go

Like a hand in a glove
Feeling blessed from above
While challenged by forces below

Through the glass wind does whistle
As we streak like a missile
Past back roads and graffiti walls

Seeing this world go by
As its babies will cry
For a future where serenity calls

Under darkening skies
The harder he tries
A poet finds that words roll away

Like the wheels of this train
Toward its destination remains
On track forever, or at least for today

Every...
7/27/02

Every moment is a chance
For a choice
Every minute provides
Time to rejoice

Every place there is room
For improvement
Every death involves more
Than entombment

Every one is part
Of the sum total
Every time we're lost, it is time
For a yodel

Every thought gives rise
To more thinking
Every lesson learned
Keeps us from sinking

Every where we go
There we are waiting
Every doubt can trigger
Life-long debating

Every breath carries
Live-giving gifts
Every interaction gives
Healing to rifts

Every rhyme word
Makes a connection
Every love as close as we come
To perfection.

Travel Salvation
En Route to Chitown
7/8/02

Summertime
8/17/02

Yet another train arriving
At yet another station
This one full of blessings
As we cross the nation

Watching the world out our window
From the comfort of beds
Bestowed on us by gods
Who saw no place for our heads

Because we gave up our seats
To some Christian youth troops
On an over-sold train
Feeling like we were dupes

On a very hot day
On a very late train
After a very long drive
Sure we were in for pain

Of our group's dispersal, at least
Into separate seats
Kept awake by kids yelling
And the train's rhythmic beats

But instead we're together
In sleeping berths that ajoin
Because we responded when asked
To give up our seats to Des Moines

And we immediately got the message
- It was more than a nod –
About how good fortunes abound
From the goodness of god.

Crickets pulsating
Sounds undulating
Hot august night going by

As its half-moon turns full
And shines brightly until
The next day rises to make its own try

Their constant buz-buzzing
Like so much pushing and shoving
Each bug trying to find its Big Chance

To break out from the crowd
To sing alone – right out loud!
Adding to summer's romance

How it all co-mingles
Giving the present moment its tingle
And one's smile its glittering afterglow

Spreading peace, joy and cheer
To all who draw near
Planting seeds for the future to grow

Glad for this and all times
And for this reflection in rhymes
On the importance of living each day

What's good still can be better
Like a change in the weather
But on destiny's course we must stay.

Direction
9/3/02

Forward!
10/14/02

It's a very fine line
Between hopes and dreams
To go from courageous to careless
Is not as far as it seems

It's just like the difference
Between uphill and down
Both are challenges that some times
Make you feel like a clown

There is no precise way
Of knowing just when
It's a new beginning we've started
Or if we've come to an end

It's this very uncertainty
That leaves us to decide
If we commit for the duration
Or just go along for the ride

By choosing our own path
Or simply following the trail
We define our role
As the hammer or nail

It's a matter of perspective
So we must keep our own
Like a light on the porch
By which our way home is shown

Moving onward
Or so I should
New options now hidden
By a mysterious hood

That is removed by our choosing
Be open/not afraid
Whatever will happen
Is a plan the gods' made

To see all as blessing
No matter how well hidden
By pain or unpleasantry
It is still all god-given

An opportunity for growth
A chance for learning life's lesson
Even if the way it turns out
Keeps us forever guessin'

No matter how well disguised
Each moment's fruition
It's our chance to give thanks
For our deep intuition

Of our goodness and gods' greatness
And our connectedness to all
With all change just a transition
Like summer turning toward fall.

Siblings' Lament
3/13/03

Morning
5/23/03

Pleasant dreams, our dear sister,
Your rest is well earned.
So painful your struggle,
How suddenly you turned

From one form to another
From darkness to light
So deep now your slumber
So far from our sight.

You'd laugh at the ironic
And fickle nature of fate
That you'd be conquering one problem
When overcome by its mate.

Yet your quest was completed
Your destiny fulfilled.
Your own children growing
And others' maladies stilled.

You again lead the way
Breaking most hallowed ground
Making the Unknown less frightful
Life's lessons more profound.

It is your eyes' twinkle
And the gleam in your smile
That illuminates the pathway
Until reaching our own last mile.

So thanks for your gifts
All so beautifully wrapped
Which remind us to leave our own lives
With no potential untapped.

A symphony of sound
Greets the sun's early rising
Birds united in song
Why is that so surprising?

It's the nature of beings
That we become joined
To form strength and value
Greater than any realm coined

All serving reminder
Of the unity within
And the capacities unleashed
If we simply begin...

...to let go of ego
It's the pavement to hell
...to practice gratitude and forgiveness
Those healing powers make us well.

...to indeed practice, not preach
And give without getting
...to reach for highest purposes
Without getting caught in the netting.

...to remain calm and hopeful-
They're our compass and map
...to stay healthy and happy
Least our energies sap.

Easier said than done
But better to fail in trying
To bring reality to our dreams
That we may live before dying.

Expression
6/16/03

Wedding RSVP
5/25/03

To such a great moment
We look forward with glee!!
Knowing our sister/aunt's happy
And so always will it be

In our ongoing Celebration of Life
To believe is to see
New possibilities emerging
Whenever two me(s) become we.

A new recruit for the Outlaws
A charmer is he
More stories soon for the telling
With a slap on the knee

Life will run the full gamut
From the A to the Z
But each door will unlock
When we use love as the key.

No time like the present
To express how you feel
In this moment like no other
As from future to past it does steal.

To know and then say
At one point in time
Where you sit, how you stand
And from where to get one more rhyme

Not just knowing, but sharing
That great sense of joy
That comes from finding the connection
Without ever resorting to ploy

To go deeply within
And at the same time reach out
Removes all possibilities
From the shadows of doubt

Admitting and accepting
Is where it begins
Any unwillingness to do so is
The sure pathway to sins

To admit vulnerability
And accept our reliance
On our selves AND each other
Whatever else is defiance

It's an expression of faith
And of hope and of love
To send off feelings for another
As if they were a dove.

Growth
8/17/03

Letting fears go –
-- Perhaps only a bit
Or at least in the way I react

Wanting to know
How it's all going to fit
But trying to make it seem matter-of-fact

Time now to grow
From the place that I sit
To one with more patience and tact

For I need to sow
That which I want to git
Looking within to find that which I've lacked

I now get to show
That my lantern is lit
Illuminating the bounds of our pact

By letting life flow
And not get in a snit
Else in yet another corner I've backed

The choice not to blow –
- Which would be to quit –
Is not the path that I've tracked

Instead continue to hoe
And not wait to commit
No matter which way the cards have been stacked.

Good Fortune
12/10/03

Good fortune is mine
It's not something I need
Like a fruit on the vine
It makes its own seed.

It grows from within
And feeds on gratitude
Faith's the source of its light
A good outlook its mood.

It's something we have
Not to which we aspire
It lives in our dreams
Not some thing we acquire.

It's not something we see
But sure know when it's there
Only when taken for granted
Does it seem not to care.

It's a gift that we're given
Not something that's earned
A true Blessing bestowed
With every lesson that's learned...

...About life, health and love
How their mysteries confound!
Which is when Good Fortune emerges
To keep our feet on the ground.

Sad Endings
12/27/03

There's many things
I've come to know
And even more
I wish I did

About birds & bees
The meaning of pi
And if this dandruff
I'll ever get rid.

But I do not want -
Ever, no never-
To find out what
Makes people afraid

To pull away fast
When love comes around
As if the cops have
Just whistled a raid.

It sure will not bite
And won't rot your teeth
But it makes some run when
It'd be better to walk.

Get out of their heads
And into their hearts
Conveying feelings
Instead of just talk

And not avoid knowing why
When, where and how
We connect to the
World's strongest power

Just as we can't see its beauty
Or enjoy its fragrance
If the petals stay closed
On the flower

There's a risk in not knowing
What makes them run off
For perhaps the
Danger is real

But its cost is as great
As the loss that is ours
If we don't allow
Ourselves to feel.

There are many things
I've come to know
And even more
I wish that I did

But those things that
Keep us from becoming alive
I just as soon
Forever stay hid.

Season's Reason
12/19/03

It's at Christmas time
That a gift came to our world
With a smile for all He would meet

All soon were singing
Songs they thought they knew not
Nor how they'd get swept off their feet

By His charms, they aplenty,
Naturally brought out our best
As if there was no such thing as defeat

By His standards, quite high,
Toward which He too mightily strived
No one needing to take a back seat

By His kindness, unbounded,
Seventy times seven turned cheeks
Beaming acceptance to all He would greet

By His love, oh so deep
Like His faith and hope too
Making the taste of life's goodness sooooo sweet.

The father to so many
Counselor, confident, friend
Providing the rhythm that keeps us upbeat

Realizing His great wish –
That peace and love come to our world –
Would be His life's ultimate feat.

Wondering into the New Year
1/2/04

Wonder how far
I'll have to go
To get to where I'm headed

Wonder how long
It's going to take
To realize I needn't have fretted

Wonder how deep
I'll have to dig
To find those secrets embedded

Wonder how well
I'll get to know
Those to whom I'm indebted

Wonder if there's
A way to hear
Messages that are unspoken

Wonder if we
Get to fix
The promises that we've broken

Wonder how happy
Our world would be
If most actions were not merely token

Wonder what's next
And how it turns out
But till then I'll just keep a-pokin'

Choices
2/8/04

Heartfelt Reflections
2/14/04

If you had a choice
To be some type of tree
Where would you grow
And what kind would you be?

If you could be water
Would you be warm or cold?
Liquid, solid or steam?
Would you be clear or grow mold?

If there was a secret
That you wish you had shared
Which one would it be
And who'd you tell, if you dared?

If the power of the Universe
Were at your command
Which forces would you harness
With the wave of your hand?

If you were to know
What others cannot
How would you tell them they're lucky
To have what they've got?

If you could so choose
How life's journey ends
What's your epitaph say
And what rifts would you mend?

If you realize now
What you wished you knew then
Would you do anything different?
Or do it all once again?

The greatest wonder of life
And the best of its thrills
Are found well below its surface

Where true love resides
In a richness of meanings that
Give living its fullness of purpose.

Finding our goodness within
And not just shortcomings
That's where the process begins...

... to help us see in all others
Their strength, verve and beauty
And not just their most obvious sins.

Which is how we come to know
The good/great! that's abounding
In a world that exists for our joy

Providing oh! so much more
Than just water and air
And other resources some use like a toy.

That leads us appreciate the Being
Of that Higher Power
Whose love makes the whole thing go 'round.

Who provides hope, light and warmth
And the opportunity to share
Without ever making a sound.

Remembering
Chicago Wedding
2/16/04

Serenity Date
2/26/04

We walked along the lakeshore
In the tempest's calming eye
Finding a moment's reflection
In between the laughter and sigh.

Seeing each lily pad that has brought us
Though not yet the one just ahead.
Knowing soon all would be changing,
But not what would be happening instead.

At that moment, it really didn't matter,
As along arm and arm how we strolled.
With the wind from behind, it was easy.
On the way back – wow! – was it cold!

But within that eye, it was all warm and toastie,
Fueled by that great inner glow
That comes from maintaining the connections
That release life's strong energy flow.

It's not difficult to recall such moments.
It's remembering to remember that's hard
When our plans go all topsy-turvy
And the Great Dealer seems to play a low card.

It is at those times that we're searching –
Wondering what it all really means
Until recalling that which we have to be grateful;
Then those two-cards somehow turn into queens.

So remember our walk on the lakeshore
Whenever life's weather turns cold,
For it's when we attend to ourselves and each other
That we receive gifts much more precious than gold.

Fifteen years, and still counting
The long minutes, hours and days
Of each moment's obstacle surmounting
As we twist through each turn in the maze.

Every where there are lessons for learning,
Any where we turn there's a gift,
Where ever life's light is still burning
While so quickly the sands of time shift.

It's through our lives that spirit is passing,
Through our mouths the message proclaimed.
By our actions a story's amassing,
Though at end just our love has remained.

But those ends mark a brand new beginning,
As each day brings the next one more near.
Like every loss bringing us closer to winning,
And absence bringing close those who are dear.

No wonder seeing clear is a rarity
Emotional sobriety's such a difficult choice.
But it's hard to live with sincerity
When you can't hear your own inner voice.

For it's from goodness we sow seeds of greatness
And in adversity we discover our strengths.
It's crooked roads that give our path straightness
If, to get it, we willingly go to any lengths.

Spring Forward
2/28/04

Cool days
Cold nights
Can spring be far behind?

Brightening prospects
Raising hopes
To which, in winters' months, we're blind

Emerging bulbs
Leafing trees
And increasing peace of mind

New growth
Emerging possibilities
Who knows just what we'll find ?!?

Deepened roots
Spreading limbs
Reaching out, if we were so inclined

Toward opportunities
Previously dormant
But now of a vibrant kind

Renewed strength
Spiritual nourishment
A new lease on life gets signed

Returning spring
Revitalizing warmth
Our next steps now being defined.

(Re)Birth Day
3/7/04

It's either a day or a decade
Can't be just a year!
How many remembrances?
How many a tear?

You left oh! so quickly
Yet still seem quite near.
When we wonder: "Can I do it?"
Your "yessss!!" still rings clear.

When those cliffs that we're facing
Seem most dauntingly sheer,
We get reminded, and hold
Our fond memories more dear.

Like when we forgot
How to get into gear,
You'd be there with a smile
And swift kick in the rear.

Or at the end, when we all tried
To bring you good cheer,
It was YOU who told US
There was nothing to fear.

So whenever life's looming
Challenges now appear,
I feel my chances are good
Cause you're so close to God's ear.

Your spirit still guides us
As on our path we steer,
Always wishing – nay knowing
That you're always here.

Word Pairs
4/13/04

Uncertain future
Buried past
Present moments
Fleetingly last

Wondering aloud
Wandering alone
Unraveling mysteries
Secretly atone

Looking within
Living without
Confronting fears
Avoiding doubt

Assuming nothing
Retaining hope
Pursuing dreams
Rejecting dope

Keeping momentum
Experiencing joy
Accepting pain
Minimizing ploy

Remembering why
Learning how
Experiencing when
Grateful now.

5/24/04

Can't see the future
Or forget the past
Know only that the present
Is not going to last

But it's moment is a gift
That always keeps giving
Each of us the chance
To learn the secrets of living

And a time in which to share
The experience of love
The greatest of all gifts
That come from above.

Morning To Night
5/29/04

Hometown Visit
Chicago
6/5/04

Sunrise through the curtains
Issues a call to the day
A whole new adventure awaits.

There is no way of narrowing
The possibilities to probabilities
Without venturing out from the gates.

The experience of life
Is not something we study
Only by living do we discover our fates.

No second-hand experience
Or hand-me-down lessons
True learning comes not at bargain rates.

At what cost our freedom(s)?
For what purpose our lives?
Answers found 'tween our loves and our hates

In that place in the middle
Of the pendulum swing
Where persistence & serenity become mates.

Later, a full moon brightly shining
Sheds a different light on those curtains
And so passes the calendar's dates

Another full cycle complete
Life, like our world, just keeps turning
Our paths are just big figure eights.

Finding our way
From here to there
Without getting lost in between

Connecting each dot
As we go the distance
'Til the "Big Picture" is there to be seen.

To be able to know
How our lives evolve
Even before they decode the gene

Accepting the downside
That comes with each up
Just as after fat times come lean.

And appreciate what we have
While we still do
But not just for that we are keen

Nor despise our weakness
-- which are strengths taken to excess* --
As if our own slate we could ever wipe clean.

This is our challenge:
To maintain our balance
Just like Jack on the stalk made of bean

And to treat all the same
Whether pauper or king
While remaining as calm as a queen.

* wisdom from Bob D.

6/30/04

Happiness is not
A place that you go
Good food that you eat
Or people you know.

It's a way of living
A choice that we make
Just like flossing our teeth
Or baking a cake.

It's not a direction to look
But a clear way of seeing
It's a life-long pursuit
A whole way of being.

We can take it with us
Wherever we go
Knowing good things will come
From the seeds that we sow.

Awesome wonders of nature
Fill up our soul
Like the sounds of a stream
That fill our ears, and console

All fears, which emanate from doubt
And questions that rise up like weeds
Threatening to stifle our spirit
And deter our very best deeds.

Any celebration of true Independence
Would focus on our present, not past
And guide us toward a bright future
Where our freedoms came first and not last.

Like freedom from both want and need,
And from suffering, but of course not pain.
Freedom from compulsion and ego
From which there is no joy or gain.

Freedom, instead, to aspire
To bring reality to our dreams
To give away without losing
To all be on winning teams.

Being free to make our own choices
Free to know, and to love
To see both benefits and burdens
As generous gifts from above.

That would be cause for celebration
Hotdogs, fireworks – the whole bit
Or maybe just reason to appreciate
How in God's plan we all fit.