

Poetry Series

Bill Grace
- poems -

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Bill Grace()

'The poets have become the pastors of our time.'
Helmut Thielicke

AUTOBIOGRAPHY;

In 1976 an extremely modest chapbook of poetry was published titled 'The Halcyon Poems.' In 1996, 'Snippets of His Glory While I Wait' a second chapbook was produced. A third chapbook is planned which will be influenced by reader feed back and also a writers critique group that meets at Gemini Ink, a writer's cooperative in San Antonio, Texas. The projected title is: 'Poems Twice Read on the World Wide Web' and the full title page will add the phrase: 'and other confessions of an agora poet.'

In seminary Bob Leslie was the professor I studied with more than any other. Robert C. Leslie published 'Jesus and Logotherapy.' This work came out of his year of study with Victor Frankl. The word 'noetic' has come to me out of these influences. Frankl understood the word 'noetic' to mean the spiritual but a spirituality that is not religiously based. I hope that some of the poetry contained in this blog is spiritual but only a very small fraction is orthodox. I am a poet of the noetic. In those moments of pure religion that I dip into I turn to my own great tradition that is Christianity whose central core, that I sometimes struggle to live, is SACRIFICIAL love. Sacrificial love is far easier said than done.

Autobiography represents a wonderful opportunity to say 'thank you' to the teachers, professors, counselors, mentors and therapists to whom I owe a legion of thanks. The places and the institutions that are found here are also part of that process that ultimately have emanated into a vision and a voice.

I have been a chaplain for thirty years at this writing. This means I have cared for the needs of individuals with out regard to their faith or denominational persuasion or their ethnicity or social class. My job has been to care.

I grew up on the farm/campus of - the historic George Junior Republic outside Freeville, New York. Theodore Roosevelt once described it as: 'a manufactory of citizens both men and women.' Don Urquhart, one of my great influences, wisely determined that the children of staff would not attend school on the institution's

grounds. Upstate New York schools were the basis of my elementary and secondary education but Cornell University was close to our home and was an influence in my development in a subtle but profound way.

Consequently my first three elementary teachers of most note were Mrs. Barry, Mrs. Healy and Mrs. Smith. They were all very different in their instructional styles but each was quite committed to the development of the children in their care.

At the secondary level there were four teachers of special note. Judy Greene helped me to understand that television was a 'cultural wasteland' and empowered books over the temptations of my own hunting preserve and an addiction to television. Elizabeth Keogh opened the world of critical thought and examination and sheltered a formative appetite for reading. She was not pleased with my substitution of Lamb's Tales for the primary reading of Shakespeare. Alfred Evans and Edgar Steele helped me to discover the study of history as an enduring passion. The only 'A' I ever received as an undergraduate is a tribute to the quality of the Evans-Steele excellence.

Without any question my greatest influence at the State University of New York at Geneseo was Dr. David A. Martin, chairman of its economics department and a Kazian Award winner. He was a mentor of the first order long before that word was used. A memorable lunch with the historian Henry Steele Commager is just one of my many debts to him.

Almost all of my professors at Geneseo were Ph. Ds. A few must receive special acknowledgement. Virginia Kemp introduced me to the thinking of Bernard Fall and probably is the one person most responsible for keeping me out of Viet Nam. Cathryn Beck was the first great scholar of Thomas More to touch my life. Dan Thomas made literature live as did Rose Bacham-Alent. Leo Rockas introduced me to Socratic thought and process. Nick Kardos got me over any glamour ideas of war and Joe Linero helped to open the world of sociology. There were others for sure who deserve mention but these names permeate a fog that is approaching forty years.

Early adult years were informed by teaching in rural and urban school settings, brokerage first line with the Connecticut Mutual and a predecessor experience with Prudential, work with street children in an institutional setting, hospital ministry with cancer victims, good and in quite a few cases great: teachers, professors, mentors and instructors. The high ideals and growing up on the farm/campus of the George Junior Republic outside Freeville, New York, in its

pre-1975 history had an enormous impact. Berkeley, CA; Geneseo, NY; and tangentially Ithaca, NY and Washington, DC culminated in undergraduate and graduate degrees. I was resident at Pendle Hill, a Quaker Study Center outside Wallingford, Pennsylvania for two years. This experience with the Quakers was a veritable spiritual switching station. Eventually two of my greatest influences in seminary would be Bob Leslie and Bob Kimball. The ordination ceremony at the First Unitarian Church of Ithaca, New York probably represents the most celebrative collective experience of my life. The military chaplaincy was a great constant from 1978 to 2006 when I was retired. The first chapbook of poetry was published in 1976 and the second in 1996, both were privately distributed.

Today, the impetus to write poetry is an almost daily imperative. I married late to a very tolerant woman. We have a daughter whose early years were formed of the soil of Russia. One Corgy and three inside cats complete the Grace household zoo. Domestic life is the frequent subject of much of what is published here. I have been fascinated with time management for well over twenty years and consult and teach in this area from time to time.

Morning Coffee

At 'The Corner Store'
I have morning coffee,
after I drop daughter at school.

If
the home town team
wins in the national finals -
it is free -
there is no charge.

The day
starts
in celebration
and
caffeine
and
a constant struggle
to raise doggerel
to poetry.□

Bill Grace

*** A Prose Quote From Walt Whitman Appropriate To The Spirit Of This Blog (1855 Preface To 'Leaves Of Grass')**

'Through the divinity of themselves shall the kosmos and the new breed of poets be interpreters of men and women and of all events and things. They shall find their inspiration in real objects to-day, symptoms of the past and future....They shall not deign to defend immortality or God or the perfection of things or liberty or the exquisite beauty and reality of the soul. They shall arise in America and be responded to from the remainder of the earth.'

Quoted from 'The Harvard Classics' edited by Charles W, Eliot copyright of 1938 by P. F. Collier & Son Corporation 'Prefaces and Prologues to Famous Books with Introductions and Notes' New York page 407 to 408.

Bill Grace

:) God In Texas

In Texas God once turned a street to gold
And as an after thought - stretched soft textured air across a continent -
So subtle was the miracle that no one noticed.

In this floating vision there is rumor of another world
Realm of singing angels and ancient spirits forever young and whole
And the portent of paved streets of gold - New Jerusalem -
Infinitely greater than an evening's optical illusion.

Bill Grace

:) Friendship's Costs

Friendships costs are many but the greatest pain is
Discovery of friend as counterfeit: lover, wife, acquaintance,
class mate, colleague - it matters not
Made of convenience, self, organizational need, usury:
The thousand softer metals that never stay the wear of time,
The least alluring often proving best.

Be careful in belief of this word - friend.

Bill Grace

:) My Dad's Classic Faith

At 50 I finally see
what precocious 10 could sense
but not articulate
The Mass - was only the ice berg's tip at sea.

Dad was an earnest lad
son of a Gloucester gal,
sweet fish monger of deep faith,
and an alcoholic father
who wounded Dad's deep pride.

War and a Naushon Forbes
gave father his life long tasks
he understood the savagery of life
yet left the chimes of music to a valley.

"Pop" would not take a drink
the Pope could not have ordered it
nor any lesser mortal,
his hope was in that Mass,
though he may well have known -
but never said a word -
that Father's secretary
took care of more than paper.

Do not carelessly dismiss
this thing called faith
that spared me an alcoholic father
a harsh man who could not understand a poet son
he understood this world
I can not blame his need of hope for another.

Bill Grace

:) Second Cookie?

Our daughter coming to this land
Of late age for a child
Knows well lessons from her native land,
So an offering of cookies to her
Helped me understand a great truth missed
In the saga of my own - oh, so American development -
That the right to a second cookie
Is not always a matter of assumption.

Bill Grace

:) Two Young Women Starting Well

Two young women starting well
How high they will finish we can not tell
Nor is this the ultimate thing
That makes the hearts of many who know them swell.

It is something special for an old heart to sing
Some deep bell even beyond their beauty rings
It may be they touch a chord of hope
In a world where to corners many it will fling.

It is not these lines where No! plays nope
It is just perhaps a glimmer of hope
That though their paths will surely greatly differ
Sometimes someone decent just seems destined for success.

Bill Grace

:) Marriage Anniversary

The hoopla is gone
The guests went so long ago
That now we bring our child to them
And count leaving 'Leapster' as a sin
Medical bills, mortgage, two cats, dog too
More gray hairs about our crowns
More sensitivity to her frown
Still, the best and greatest decision I do not rue.

Bill Grace

:) Mom Remembered Past Her Death's Anniversary

Four years from death plus a little
I miss our frequent chats
And counsel so wise and full of gift
That death has broken the seal
Of those better conversations
And revealed wisdom that eyes
Of age could far better see than those of youth.

Bill Grace

:) Of Icons That Hum, Vroom And Sometimes Shatter

The fine watch exchanged for flight time so long ago
Taught me the meaning of the phrase 'fly by night' when it was stolen
Even then its gold and balanced beauty of face
An icon of something more than market values.
Through an eBay miracle again it hums upon my wrist.

The theologian Jacques Ellul has written
That the watch is the primary symbol of modern man
I know enough of horology's history to understand
Long before Einstein it helped to conquer longitude
When latitude was safe.
Symbol or not it was no talisman this instrument of filling
'The unforgiving minute with sixty seconds worth of distance run.'

All of this is sad and somewhat tragic
Homer far more than Jesus
Filling the spirit of my days
Before dog and cat and couch would help me proclaim
A gospel only a few will understand.

It is my mother who saves me
Who in her full maturity lost a husband long before
And a tray full of ruined Hummels
With perfect peace of voice
That told no destruction to her soul of loss - said
'They were only things.'

My fine watch was once another Bill's
And now for a while it will be mine
It's nice to have the loan back
And although the world will kill for it
And its currency is supplanted by better tools
I know from Mom and loss a deeper truth
'It is only a thing.'
Which is the thing of peace and perhaps even of God
And far more worthy than seen things
Even as it hums upon my wrist.

The line in quotation marks in this poem comes from Rudyard Kipling's poem 'If'. I have always loved that phrase and apologize I did not put quotation marks around it from the very first time it was published on Poemhunter. BG

Bill Grace

:) Recipe For A Perfect Cup Of Coffee

Store Kona beans in freezer

Use grinder

Brew at Fahrenheit 211

Microwave technology to help control

Use Melitta's classic shape

Enjoy this poetry in a cup!

Bill Grace

:) Reflection On Three Robert Frost Poem Dates

If 1912 is the date he burned his boats
Then three poem dates I find of interest
1915 - The Road Not Taken
1920 - Fire and Ice
1923 - Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening
My understanding \$200 his income
From his first twenty years of writing
Makes me feel ok I'll never earn a penny.

Bill Grace

:) Russia

Candy given to comfort at take off
Spontaneous applause in landing
Our guides grand father murdered by Stalin's men
The vastness of her Western steppe experienced
If only through jet window review,
The strangeness where every car could be a cab
And duress no excuse for lack of faithfulness
To things too deep for talk.
The old ways and the new ways
Cross and merge and intertwine
Russia emerges slowly to her new age.

Bill Grace

:) Yes, Professor Cohen!

Yes, Professor Cohen I fear that you are right
And lack even in this quiet space
The courage to stand behind you as I should,
Too few our fellows knowing who Kennan was -
And the inadequacy of two paltry undergraduate semesters of Her history -
Knowing just enough to suspect how correct you are.
Noting how even Charlie danced around you
And my impression that George Ball seemed to sort of disappear
From a far less critical area of concern after the great council.
I can only say thank you for trying to alert us
To what some would call a limiting factor
And with sadness salute you that you would try
To save us from the day when we will weep.

Bill Grace

:) Advice To A Poet On Witness Of His Attempted Murder*

Rainer Maria Rilke gives good advice:

'... go into the depths in which your life takes rise
there you will find the answer to the question if you MUST create.'

You have received bad counsel

From the wolf pack that assembled to kill your spark.

I felt your poem's great beauty.

It took me with you to another place.

They killed you with their damned technique.

Use Rilke's dictum more than ever - Write!

The electronic book has changed it all.

Let consensus have the paper world.

Write and re-write until you know it says what you mean to say.

Critiqueing committees do not write a poem,

Thank God Jefferson was a committee of one.

The power of their 'inalienable' process not denied.

Bill Grace

:) Ageing Couple

It is nice to watch them
Much as one might observe
Deer feeding undisturbed.
Just the every day significance of little things
Perhaps it is the gait that belongs to age
Or some other subtle thing
It is nice to watch
Those who go at growing old.

Bill Grace

:) An Easter Evening Hug

The hug from daughter
Unbidden, unceremonial, undemanded, unexpected
A small thing in her universe
An act of grace received in mine
A gift befitting His highest Holy Day
The manifestation through an Easter evening hug
Of a far more sacrificial and compounding love
That leaves the Easter bunny's eggs in dust.

Bill Grace

:) Au Contraire Mr. Kooser (2005)

Dear Poet Laureate when you quietly state:

'Poetry's purpose is to reach other people and to touch their hearts.'

You give good market guidance but

Rilke has also told us that we 'must go into the depths in

which our lives take rise to see whether we must create' a more sage

guidance it seems to me given Frost

Bill Grace

:) Brief Conversation

'Hello poet.'

'Hello prophet.'

Three decades plus five

So long to remember so brief a conversation

With a fellow undergraduate named Chris Lazara.

Bill Grace

:) Christ - Modernity And A Free Cup Of Water

There is an accounting for even a glass of water in the great business.
There is no charge.

Soda costs and water is free.

The great business understands that the cup of water is not truly free.

Free water belongs to a Christ we do not easily see and

Has a theologian's understanding of the deeper reality.

Why must it be so difficult for us ordinary folk to more deeply see

As the theologians and a great business that is on every corner?

Bill Grace

:) Class Year Brother

At the college reunion
we talked about him
the one
in absentia
the one so difficult
if not impossible
to keep track of,

TWENTY YEARS LATER

or was it

THIRTY PLUS YEARS LATER

I am with my Polish girl friends
at the small table
talking things Polish
in English
she runs his full name
on 'Google'
tells me
he is dead
they tell me
I turned 'white'
my class year brother
the one in absentia
the difficult one
has the last
communication.

Bill Grace

:) Crystal Rain

Fine rain caught by spotlight
Freezes silver splinters
Too heavy for the rays to hold
A moment of magic that stands
Against the currents of the driven day.

Bill Grace

:) Daughter's Universe

My daughter's taught me
A lot about humanity,
This mortal coil that holds us all,
Her small hand that touches mine
A universe I never knew before.

Bill Grace

:) Deep In The Bowels

Deep in the bowels live those of great influence
Lindsay would dance upon the surface of New York
For all the world to watch as he walked Harlem's streets
Gave the unions all they wanted and almost
Birthed a bankrupt city in the process of
Small trade offs in the quest to be a President.
It was the school teacher's pension fund ultimately
That saved The City.

Bill Grace

:) Dogs And Cats Who Talk

Your cat may yet come to talk to you
Early in the morning or when at best or worst
(They sense the energy of life if things are well or ill.)
Do not let Saint Francis take you hostage
To keep you from learning how to be truly still
It is an ancient craft not easily mastered
But it is the only door if you truly want
Your cat, or even dog, to talk to you.

Bill Grace

:) Dog's Four Biscuit Morning

The routine is this:

Off back porch return - a biscuit

Return from walk - a biscuit

Consideration for kitchen attention - 1B

Cat feeding deflection - a biscuit.

Bill Grace

:) Eulogy For 'Duke' A Long Dead Dog

Officially he was Othello and black as The Moor
A dog of perfect face
But a little too wide of flank for show perfection.
Of such sweet disposition
MJ literally took ham from his mouth
With only temporary cost of betrayed confusion to his face.

Therefore he must be given the benefit of doubt
For one solitary night when father was away
With stranger he turned completely vicious at the door
And denied evil entry, vetoing mother's gracious spirit.
What that darkness in somatic form intended I will never know
And am convinced to this date we were protected on that night of snow
By a loving lovely Labrador a little too wide of flank for perfect show.

Bill Grace

:) Firefly

Firefly

Small your light

It takes the glow of many

To mark the night.

What wisdom do you know,

What can you speak,

Of regions far beyond your realm?

Firefly help me listen

For your whisper in the night.

Bill Grace

:) Formula For Better Cat Relations

Cat relations have gotten better
Since learning the simple fact
Of cat need for control
Which guarantees what might pass for cat affection
By leaving them always on their feet.

Bill Grace

:) Genesis Of Our Financial Crisis

Realtor's sign:

Low interest rate

POOL

No down payment

No closing costs

Bad credit ok

Call 666-666-6666

Licensed agent.

Bill Grace

:) Hijack Haiku

A wind through bamboo
Words only partially give
Sound so beautiful.

Bill Grace

:) Home As A Silent Cathedral

I oft feign sleep till they are gone
It is not I love them less
Than the silence of gray morning
The chime of clock and peep of watch
Even errant mosquito
These are the distractions
Life itself is the distraction.

The paradox is that in the abhorred silence
We can be made whole
If love is present in the walls
Even God can be found beyond them.

Bill Grace

:) Incident On A Night Rural Road

The true hero
In the collision that didn't happen
Was the driver who swerved
Throwing his car with his family in it
Into the road friendly field.

In the face of death I loose my snootiness
Declaring it was in the goodness of God's grace
A nonincident-incident, neither of us being hurt.

My shock from how close we came to disaster
His relief I wasn't a crazed racist.
Instinctively we realized the night was our enemy,
With a black rural road where I was ill experienced,
And not each other.

Bill Grace

:) Jesus On The Installment Plan

The great purchases of my life are three
Wife, Jesus and the military
The first two still being paid
Military days are what is staid.

Bill Grace

:) Love Poem For A Wedding - (1976 Chapbook)

I love:

The tides that ebb and flow
And marbled lights on broken roads
The warmth of poetry within
Evening caress that transcends sin.

I love:

The birds that were duped by an early thaw
To mid-winter song, and wonder -
If they were so very wrong?

I ask you to take this ageing ring of gold
Companion touchstone of a first communion
And to hold its trust as we will mold
What God shall join for evermore.

Bill Grace

:) My Friend Fear

My friend fear has been with me all my days
No doubt thanks to Dad beating me at four
This brutal incident taught me even in early flight
To check my six to see what may be gaining on me
Spared me Viet Nam just to begin the catalog
That pre-dates a certain wrestling mat.

Bill Grace

:) Of Young Husbands, Toilet Seats And Visual Learning

In our early marriage one constant issue
was the toilet seat and its proper position of salute.
This brings us to the issue of the audio or visual learner.
Despite wife's frequent admonitions,
I didn't get it.
It was the seeing that was educational.
Right conduct following right behind and
Breaking the unseemly and unintended intransigence.
Sometimes truth is in the seeing.

Bill Grace

:) On Despair

Those who care must despair
A battle never to be won
If God truly sent his only son
Even he was not enough
When up against such brutal stuff
As the blood that fills our veins.
Best we work only for the smallest seed of hope,
For fear - despair will catch us - if we dare look back..

Bill Grace

:) On Paris Hilton

This Paris Hilton thing makes me sad
So much of it comes from who's her dad
I don't defend actions that we know are bad
But grieve that the lives of the rest of us
Have become so vacuous
Watching this media circus has become a fad.

Bill Grace

:) Poem Of Pure Autobiography

Mother was Presbyterian and Dad Roman Catholic
It took them a silver anniversary to truly bridge the gulf
And I about as long to find my way
With help from Quakers and Unitarians and other
Strange creatures of the light.

Princeton all but bluntly told me that my type was not welcome
And Chicago was offended at chapbook publishing that spoofed at Shelly
But Berkeley welcomed me
And much to Mother's dismay I said 'yes'
Not knowing what yes could mean
But desperate for heavier credentials.

Harvard even dimly figures in
For all my friends were going not to Harvard
But to its antitheses established in the great fight
That split New England congregationalism
And gave the word - Unitarian - to us as a term of derision.
Even Andover-Newton was not right
I tried it for three full days
Knowing by instinct's pain it was not the place.
Despite Dean Peck's powerful preaching.

Berkeley was for me correct and in its great freedom
A strange thing emerged, a love to learn would come and stay
Following this strange thing called truth
To an old rugged cross
Quite acceptable to Presbyterians but not to those Unitarians
Who are too busy to stop and learn.

Bill Grace

:) Poem Of Pure Autobiography - Watches

First there was the Donald Duck
Then the Hopalong Cassidy
Then Grammy gave a Swiss Incablock in 4th grade
A real watch that lasted past
Bertha Lederer commenting on it in the undergrad stacks
Until I sort of killed it
When hunting for a body
I mercifully did not find
In a murky pool
When I was a life guard.

By then I was hooked
Accuracy to a minute a month
Aunt Ruth gave the money
That bought a splendid Accutron.

Some years and at least two watches later
A friend nudged me over my addiction
Suggesting Kairos over Chronos
As antidote to the poison
Of my marriage to the unforgiving minute

Eight therapists later
At last I can shudder
For the child who was beaten
Because at first try
I could not make
My mind a slate.

Bill Grace

:) Poem Of Pure Autobiography In Blank Verse

In youth I rarely prayed
So full of self was I
A lid of pride so tight
Only God could pry it off.

This thing called pride
Is no small thing
My street kids had it
And so did I.
The tension between us was great.
Love held us in its unseen sovereignty,
Ruled with a scepter no one saw.

At age added, a different scene -
Body and mind no longer impervious to time
This other thing I sense but can not name
A presence always there
The thing that gives the modern mind its scare
It does not work like gravity
But I know it's true,
Especially if I'm not too forceful
In declaring this truth to you.

Bill Grace

:) Poemhunter As A Poet's Democracy

If I have any constituency it is here
Among the many who compete for voice
A would be President who discovered quite late
He did not have the stomach for the necessary tricks
And did not care in youth how savagely uneven
The blocks are set for long distance running.
Here let me shine or preish it is ok
Sylvia Plath as wecome as you dear reader
The inner city computer educates too
Only in this space is democracy true.

Bill Grace

:) Poetry And Coffee

Poetry and coffee
These two exist
All else the world's great dross.

Alone these two exist
On a quiet rain swept morn
Before the fever starts
And daughter unbidden
Embraces my neck with her small arms.

Bill Grace

:) Poetry Of 12 Words

Cat on lap
Tock of clock
Wife sings
Work ends
Silence
Night.

Bill Grace

:) Preface To The Poetry Of W. A. Grace

Perhaps this is my task in life
To filter things that touch a soul
And to hold the strains till a pen can mold
Feeling into form.

Bill Grace

:) Problematic Watch (Autobiography)

In the days of lieutenancy
Wearing a heavy watch of no great pedigree
My boss - a colonel, who was a kind man
Warned me that in some countries
I would do well not to wear my watch
The removal of a hand being
The only impediment for some
To pecuniary gain of its possession
Fortunately for all of this I was stationed in Germany
Where wearing a watch was not any sort of problem.

Bill Grace

:) Punk Kid As Future Door Assassin

With age sometimes comes an appreciation for beauty
So I feel free to grieve for my neighbor's door
That was assassinated by a wanton kid with drooping drawers
Who cared nothing about the beauty of cut and fashioned glass
But saw the door only as impediment to unbidden entry.
Shattered, I doubt our culdesac
Will ever see such beauty in a door again
For surely that youth's marauding was a sin.

My father had a glass door though not as fine
Which closed with youthful petulance brought in kind
A consequence that made me think before next time
With impulse rash - and youthful - and to be completely truthful
I see Dad's sternness as necessity now
And understand why that hard closing almost made him have a cow.

Bill Grace

:) Reading, Writing, Arithmetic And Morals

The insight from the old school house
Was greater than its simple room
Before the time men walked on the moon
And assorted means and mechanisms
Continued to assert their powers of true Gods
Which would claim our greater centers.
The fact that morality was taught against a backdrop
Where sin was regarded as much more real
And a force of our nature worthy of contention.

Bill Grace

:) Silence

Reading the poet Sandra Fowler

The phone is quiet

Daughter and wife sleep

Clack of the keyboard

Tick of mantle clock

The power of silence

In a noisy world

Sometimes will break through

Sometimes receives its due.

Bill Grace

:) Six Of Twelve Reasons Not To Execute Moussaoui

1. He wants death.
2. He wants death.
3. He wants death.
4. He wants death.
5. He wants death.
6. He wants death.

Bill Grace

:) Something Of A Truth That Is Above

The calculus is much more than we see
And you beloved Uncle beyond my mother's blood
Taught me in last days upon the planet
Something of a truth that is above

You can have a small empire
Or a great one
At the end, the end is end.

Bill Grace

:) The Daily Doggerel - Reading Mary Oliver

Every evening I try to read her
five poems by Mary Oliver
five poems - no more - no less.

They free me to be still
they help me to be quiet
I - for five poems - do not apologize
to the world for who I am
that I exist
that I write bad poetry.

They give me strength
with which I go after reading
and help clean the cat box.

Bill Grace

:) Travel To Russia

If to Russia you have great need to go
There is much more buried there than snow
And Hitler and Napoleon both will tell
Casual preparation is a formula for woe
If in Russia you truly want success to show
Do not casually to Mother Russia go.

Bill Grace

:) Two Rings

He gave her a ring shown on black velvet
She wore it daily till her death
She gave him a locket ring
With scrolled letters and hint of heavy gold
He wisely knew its danger and left its wear to son
So this marriage through their years
That went of two score minus three
One with ring and one with out
This was a marriage that grew more true with time.

One last word, young lovers of our different age,
You would do well to ponder the enigma of a world
Where rings could count both for so little and so much
A world in which there was no magic in gold.

Bill Grace

:) Wife's Gift Of Box Of Cedar

It is even for one who loves boxes quite fine
as the one Sarah Chilinski brought from Denpermanente
though not nearly as carefully joined.
In discussing life strategies
Sarah told me I must always keep that box
and, heeding her wisdom, I have strangely kept
my word all these many years,
but this hollowed slab of cedar that can bring the scent of a grove
from beyond our door
is still truly beyond description.

Bill Grace

"lilly" A Cat Accounted For Beyond God

The cat at the flower shop door
playing fast paw moves
(sort of a cat patty cake)
with my young daughter
captured our hearts
and with time
came to live with us.

The cat was loved
by all except the dog
and fellow inside cats.
Suffered with a certain dignity
her lack of peer comradery.

The accident
The pet emergency room
The long night and early morning
The Vet
The deep tears
The release to God.

This evening we do not have her,
a first miss in a decade;
- - - - no more a constant presence on the back of the couch
- - - - no more her voice that of neither dog bark or cat meow but some
strange hybrid
- - - - no more oil hair licked into a morning's shamanic frenzy
- - - - no more trigger to a middle of the night dog bark
- - - - no more irrepressible force for ever more cat food and treats.

The healing peace of evening comes.
There is a quiet ache.
Even the dog seems to know
even the dog
gives the outside cat a break.

Bill Grace

"lilly" Accounted For Beyond God

The cat at the flower shop door
playing fast paw moves
(sort of a cat patty cake)
with my young daughter
captured our hearts
and with time
came to live with us.

The cat was loved
by all except the dog
and fellow inside cats.
Suffered with a certain dignity
her lack of peer comradery.

- - -The accident
- - -The pet emergency room
- - -The long night and early morning
- - -The Vet
- - -The deep tears
- - -The release to God.

This evening we do not have her
a decade's first miss
- - - - no more constant presence on the couch back
- - - - her voice that of neither dog or cat but some strange hybrid
- - - - oily hair licked into a morning's shamanic frenzy
- - - - trigger to a middle of the night dog bark
- - - - irrepressible force for more cat food and treats

The healing peace of evening comes.
There is a quiet ache
even the dog seems to know
even the dog
gives the outside cat a break.

"love You"

Trips have always been the time of emotion
The first kiss was seeing you off to some place
Neither trip nor location was dangerous
But travel is always uncertain, and –
Uncertainty blunts the fever of our lives
Things emerge which we do not anticipate or understand
Life a first kiss or the words: "Love you."

Bill Grace

"slow Ahead" Poetry In 2012

At 1,000 I will stop and trim the tree
So that the world will have a little less bad poetry
For each one ahead a check on one behind
Nice to keep the ones that touch a piece of things sublime
Suspecting that even the greats had their struggles in this area.

Bill Grace

"smack"

Among athletes
the divers have the best idea
in all applauding
those who "smack."

This pink badge of distinction
is awarded
upon the occasion
of a more horizontal
than vertical entry
into water's slowing domain,
the applause
almost always
spontaneous.
The ease
or complexity of the dive
is not the issue,
the pain of misadventure
being known by all.

In this act I find
a hope for the world,
RELATIONSHIP -
celebrated,
in the antics of her young.

Bill Grace

"tatonka" On Draft Versus "black Top" In Bottle

In my quest for the ultimate dark
Having learned quite a few are stark
That long ago brew from Budejovice being memorable
I will give New Glarius Brewing
HONORABLE MENTION.
With great copy
in the 'Brewhouse' menu
Tatonka alludes to the Czar.
I know the capacity of the Russians
For an excellent brew
What I had to day
Would never have made it through
To his royal lips
Before that fateful July slay.

Bill Grace

+ Street Kids

Sometimes, alone in the chapel - a silence that rings
And an opportunity to remember them.

More than their weapons, once feared,
More than their ability to transform the common
into instruments of self-destruction,
More than those too wounded or too impoverished of vision
to give the drought of care and discipline their need bespoke,
More than all these, I remember their stories.

Marcus, up late one night, truant from bed, telling his legacy
of eight short years caring for a drunken, passed out father,
his terror infinite six light years later.
Tony, who took the robbery rap.
Paul, the greatest triumph of a love attempted and impossible
three years of street survival,
He knew the wonders of a dippy dumpster that keeps the rain off
and might even provide a meal.
Jonathan threatened to jump from 11 stories,
But in truth only wanted the attention of half the county.

Antics - with fear behind - make a smile.
Still there is a certain grief that mingles with strange rage
That life should be so harsh on those who Christ embraced.
I would not idealize them - no, not even here for you, not even for them.
The experience taught too much of sin and deeper passions.

Jesus did not count the cost.
Do we dare to share with Him the fearful questions
and follow where they may lead?
To pray, to listen, and against everything to hope.

Bill Grace

14 Seconds

Fourteen seconds an eternity
When every second is watched.

Bill Grace

150 Characters

Daughter
being of the electronic culture
thinks nothing
about "Twitter."
It is a great
institution for celebrities.
The Pope
can tell the world
he has a cold.

His
Holy Father
however
may need
more than one hundred fifty
characters
to tell the world
he has pneumonia.

Bill Grace

'1-800-Vent ' A Nonpoem Title Gifted To Me By The Rev. K. R. Simpson

To find Kenyon you must travel far
He has great spirituality
Is not an ecclesiastical star
A friendship not older than the hills
But beating most trees planted today.

Bill Grace

888 - I - Can - Sue

'888 - I - CAN - SUE'

In the Great City

Sometimes the most clear language

Is only for money.

Bill Grace

911 Memoriam Words

911 Memoriam

The sky in Texas mourned this day
A million places joined her.

First thought a movie
Then realization of news
Then fears for civil liberties
Relapse into television addiction
.....The face of the young fireman caught going up
.....By one of the survivors coming down.

At another massacre in another time in another place
General Braddock's dieing words come home:
'Who ever would have thought it? '

THEY did.

My month of shock their joy.

Bill Grace

A Blonde At The Oldest Modern Art Museum In Texas

The blonde
a bottle beauty
alluring to my taste
despite the ocean of years
separating us
presented herself
at the admissions desk.

'Would you welcome an
overview strategy
for seeing the McNay? '

She said yes
and
received the standard
gift of a briefing.

On checking out,
which most do not,
she told me
she was on assignment.

'I have to identify
two works
which have the
same theme.'

'Did you see
El Greco's 'Head of Christ'
next to the video alcove? '

'No -
there were too many
people in there.'

I took her to the
courtyard,
Showed her
Ulman's

'War Mother.'

A smart phone
from nowhere appeared,
a picture was snapped.
I will always wonder
if we got an A.

Bill Grace

A Camp Counselor's Happiness And Misery Reminiscence V4.

Happiness is kissing the camp mascot - Pierre.

Misery is trying to explain that Pierre has basset hound germs.

Misery is when Pierre won't let you into your cabin.

Happiness is a warm bed.

Misery is a cold morning shower.

Misery is wearing one slipper and one sneaker to breakfast.

Happiness is hot coffee in the morning.

Happiness is when all your campers arrive on time.

Misery is greeting your new campers in pajamas and combat boots.

Happiness is chasing a mink and calling it a gopher.

Happiness is seeing the deer in the orchard.

Happiness is rowing from Victim island.

Happiness is a tractor ride.

Happiness is making a pin for your mother.

Happiness is hitting a bull's eye on the rifle range.

Happiness is going on a cookout and remembering absolutely everything,
EXCEPT the matches.

Happiness is working in the pottery shop.

Happiness is putting the row boats in the water.

Happiness is biting a cat's tail and chasing it up a tree.

Misery is when it is your camper that is biting a cat's tail and chasing it up a tree.

Happiness is having a sister at camp.

Misery is when she tells your mother that you are not going to church.

Misery is when the song you've been working on for three weeks is used for
kindling.

Bill Grace

A Candidate For Ending The Final Chapbook When It Comes

At the very end
No more words to send
Trophies count no more
The goal is not to score
For new poems shall be no more.

Bill Grace

A Centurion's Spear

With no small benefit
Of time and money behind me
I admire and respect most
Those parents who having neither
Keep the deadly snarl from their lips
This harpoon of sound
That more than wounds a child
Drives steel into the heart
As sure as any centurion's spear.

Bill Grace

A Corgy In Control Of Everything

Our dog barks in fierce alarm
Proceeds to down stairs investigation
Of the familiar sound from the water closet.
Like his master he must be in control of everything
Like his master - ultimately - he is in control of nothing
Except the timbre of a pseudo bark.

Bill Grace

A Country Christmas Eve (1976 Chapbook)

On a solitary vigil so cold and fair
The air took feeling from my face
And gave a glowing in its place,
I saw snow glistening upon the fields
And heard the ringing silence of the night.

Not a breath of wind stirred the snow to dance
As a renegade star put the moon to shame
A distant silver fire that lit the blue night sky.

Bill Grace

A Deep Bite

Some have handled it
by setting off out of season fireworks at night,
some meticulous trimming
of shrubs about their homes
in early morning.
I paddle in the pool
I sit in my drive way
watch the small gray outside cat
watch the neighbors
watch the azul sky once a fierce moving gray
drink a dinner beer
talk to the moon
hear the garage roof struck
by an errant lawn mower rock
and realize it could have taken my eye,
230,000 is the press number that sticks.

The vision of 230,000 on crosses
crucified by conquering legions.....does not help
the word - ineffable.....does not help
the Latin phrase - mysterium tremendumdoes not help
nor does it help that Voltaire and Rousseau had it out in brilliant letters for a
decade at the time of the Lisbon Earthquake over a much similar
tragedy*****- - - - -*it does not help.

I grieve
- - - - so much is lost in what approaches nuclear disaster
I am relieved
- - - - it is not my house and town destroyed II am thankful
- - - - to have pen and dry paper to write these words.

- - - No - we are a little inland
- - - - -it may be what saved us
- - - - -the National Weather Service reports
- - - - -the killer of cities
- - - - -came within fifty miles.

The garbage truck comes.
a man from 'Heavenly Lawn Care Service'

never before seen
with a perspiration stain
down the center of his back
mows my lawn and never says a word
never asks a dime.

I wonder if it is
the most elegant post card marketing
the world has ever seen,
or was I visited
by something approaching an angel of old
who also is struggling
with God's darkest side?

Even a sent angel does not help.

What helps
is
to
help
mend
a hurricane.

Bill Grace

A Doctor's Advice

Our lives are driven things
But not driven well
When we neglect the vehicle's maintenance
A simple reality
Neither we nor life is 1 plus 2 plus 3
It takes a life time for us to know
And even more for this truth to show
But a second chance at maintenance is not given.

Bill Grace

A God Greater Than The Ego Of My Own Success

Watching the jeep cut through the corner gas station lot
I do not believe the driver on auto destiny for hell
But believe from stop sign violations of my youth -
And accidents there from -
Some lessons were well learned.

Those who cheat will succeed in avoiding stop light or tax
Yet life's more complicated than this fact
Something slowly grinds
And ultimately grants victory to those who find
A God greater than the ego of their own success.

Bill Grace

A Grief Observed

The sign was a plea for social justice
Hit and run death had taken him
Father, son, husband, uncle -
It depended on how you entered the tragedy.

Then it was gone
Then it was back
Now it appears no more
While green grass grows
Beside black asphalt.

Some force unseen
Could not tolerate the protest
With its silent cry
While Jesus sheds a tear in heaven.

WAG note: I believe Kenneth Patchen's 'The Deer and the Snake' has influenced the development of this offering.

Bill Grace

A Jfk Remembrance On The 50th Anniversary Of His Death

At fifty years
His shadow passes
And those who knew his charm
If only through television or alarm
As we too go into that good night.

He loved the girls it's true
But I found of greater interest
His tent mate from the Solomons -
Commander Robinson
Who told of horrendous weight lost
When he was recovered unconscious
in the water
It was his life vest
that saved him
McArthur said he should have
been court martialed
The Navy gave a decoration.

He was light and shadow,
To use Barb Marquis' phrase -
Kept the military on their leash
when so much seemed lost
when we came so close.

I wonder if what Aunt Ruth told me is true
when she was at Columbia after Elmira
but before Syracuse before Cornell,
that Professor Neustadt told her
he was to be given carte blanche
to discover the why
of the Bay of Pigs screw up
their meeting set for 29 November
to discuss the guidelines for engagement.

I know Dad wept but twice
In all the years I knew him

When his real son died
When Jackie received the flag
I guess
I'll salute them both
Right here.

Bill Grace

A Killer Of Poets

My instinct is to avoid them:
The English teacher who shrugs
When the sixteen year old is not Frost or Dickinson
Who can not see the beauty of either the effort or the interest,
The critic who has never penned a line
Other than that of criticism,
The editor who can find nothing good to say of a failed piece,
The parent who will say:
'You will never make any money with that stuff' - though probably true -
Fails to understand poetry is the thing that helps see us through
A land that is a killer of poets.

Bill Grace

A Little Mark

An effort to leave a little mark
sure proof I'm not so very smart
yet being grateful for a sojourn here
as long as pain is not more great
before God opens the other gate.

Bill Grace

A March Not Made On MLK Day

MLK was at BU when 'Jack' Taylor was there
He had no contact with him
Though both were theologs.
When I asked my sophmoric question
MLK was already a name.

I have come to admire King more and more
Wonder if someday he will live with Gandhi and Jesus
In my pantheon of heroes.

No, it is not King
But the wave of a 100,000 folk
Washing down a street
That draws me.

A good group of folk for sure
This is a great part of the lure
Rabble can not use these great numbers
To mask their mischief.

Yes, I will honor the great chieftain
When Andrew Young is an even more distant memory
From a remarkable evening of learning
But today I will let my body heal
And celebrate for a moment that flesh that held his soul
That a nation might heal and be made more whole.

Bill Grace

A Mother's Confession Appropriate To Her Day

The woman who most in our church would vote a saint
Shared that if she had known at birth
The pain that that young infant would bring
The destruction of inheritance, lawyers, counselors, judges and debt
She would have drowned him long before
Drugs carried him to their universe.

But she did not know and her son
Now liberated from the talons of this evil
Will, if you wish to take my bet,
Bless her with a: 'Happy Mother's day! '
A few days forward from these lines.

Bill Grace

A Mother's Day Approbrium

The woman who most in our church would vote a saint
Shared that if she had known at birth
The pain that that young infant would bring
The destruction of inheritance, lawyers, counselors, judges and debt
She would have drowned him long before
Drugs carried him to their universe.
But, she did not know and her son -
Now liberated from the talons of this evil
Will, if you wish to take my bet,
Bless her with a: 'Happy Mother's day! '
A few days forward from these lines.

Bill Grace

A Much Belated Salute To The Gardner As Evangelist

In the redemption of my life
The sensate played first violin
The presence of a beauty unspoken, unheard
The color of flowers with eternal call - silent
That played across the adult years of gray
With its splotches of black and turquoise and gold
Until the bankrupt soul,
Like a chick pecking out of its shell
Breaks forth into light
An intimation of life and death and light
Unnamed beyond our present darkness.

Bill Grace

A Nest For Helen

Bird nest
found upon the ground,
incarnate, honest
delicate wires of hair, paper, grass
the opposite of a Mussolini speech.

Finding it I wondered
if there is an antidote
to tragedy
that is sound.

Tragedy that stalks the universe
of great and small
informs our need for storm sails
on our ship
for days that are not fair
cutting the giddiness of full sails
and light ballast.

We know there is storm ahead
a task in trying to be
prepared
for that which is not yet
upon us.

Hope
that, that thing setting us free
is both with
and greater
than the moment.

Bill Grace

A Personal History Of The Color - Pink

Crayon in a box of twenty four

Pejorative of right towards left during Cold War

Word struck by colonel out of sensitivity to World War II vets

Susan B. Komon's living memorial color

Healthy tissue recorded with hi tech medical photography.

Bill Grace

A Poem A Day

A poem a day
Enough to say
What little truth
My life has found.

Bill Grace

A Poem A Day For The Religious

A poem a day
All I have to say
From century's two third years
Upon this planet of tears
This was not my way
In case these words should stay
For me the world a place of almost constant play
While Jesus weeps the devil almost never sleeps.

Bill Grace

A Poem For Juan Felipe Herrera

Herrera
thank you
for your care
your humanity
your skill
of poetic capture
but most
your care.
Even a Poet Laureate
is common
but
care
is not.
Thank you.

Bill Grace

A Poem/Prayer For Veterans Of Past And Present

I thank them for their gifts
A nation free of monarchy and titles
A nation free of slavery
A nation neither a Kaiser nor a Hitler rule
A nation that kept South Korea free
A nation behind the United Nations
A nation not understanding Viet Nam
Yet reconciled to those who fought,
A nation that held Joe Stalin and his successors at bay
A nation Saddam Hussein could not defy
A nation hunting terrorists in terrible terrain
A nation whose veterans
More often than not
Represent our very best,
To all an inadequate and quiet
Thank you
and Amen.

Bill Grace

A Poet's First Prose Paragraphs On Noetic Theology

WHAT IS NOETIC THEOLOGY AND WHY COULD THIS BE AN IMPORTANT QUESTION?

It is through the influence of Victor Frankl that the word 'noetic' has come to me. If Robert C. Leslie's interpretation is correct Frankl understands noetic to mean that which is spiritual but not religiously based. To many, perhaps of orthodox faith, this must appear to be an oxymoron but let me continue. I worked as a chaplain's assistant for my job at a large teaching hospital during my seminary years. On a rare Sunday off I attended a worship service at a nearby Fellowship of the Unitarian Universalist Association. It was a jazz concert being given as a memorial service for the daughter - who had died - of the musician who was playing. The sense of grief that poured out of the end of that father's saxophone for his dead daughter is a vivid memory thirty five years later. There was no talk of Jesus or resurrection, and for that matter there was relatively little talk, but it was an unmistakably spiritual experience that has stuck with me. I am convinced that there is a noetic spirituality that functions in the world for better or for worse.

Here is a second example. The scene is a class room at the State University of New York at Geneseo. The course is comparative literature with Rose Bacham Alent as the instructor. Dr. Alent was once the translator for the American Commander in Berlin. War is the topic under consideration. Viet Nam is hot. She is describing a European war memorial to us. Her look becomes extremely distant and she rattles something off to us in Spanish and French and German. She is reading the words on the memorial and finally she gives us the English translation. Her spirit returns from Europe but all who were in that class, and truly present, went with her in a spiritual sense. Over a decade later Robert C. Leslie building on the wisdom of Victor Frankl helps me to understand this experience. Our class had an experience that was spiritual but it was not religiously based. Rose Alent defeated both time and space as an academic priestess. Perhaps this is only inspired teaching but I suspect there is something more significant and that this is an example of noetic power or spirituality in an academic setting. In fairness to Dr. Alent's memory I am sure she never in her life time saw herself as any sort of priest but this does not detract from the power of a very old memory.

Bill Grace

A Poet's Poem On Christmas Eve – 2011

I wish that poetry could help me see
Life's situations with a little more clarity
Those moments when I go red – if not voice violent - hot
So that in the predicament I'd find a more calm and gentle spot
Such as discovering the dog's shit upon my sole
At the precise moment when I am attempting to roll.

Bill Grace

A Pool Named For 'Pop'

When the pool was named for my father
He made the only speech I know of during his life
'Nothing like naming a pool for a guy who can't swim a stroke, '
and he sat down.

When he died they almost renamed the place for him
Presageing the lessons in love and death and remembrance
That would come to me as a pastor two decades later.

Bill Grace

A Post William Cullen Bryant Thanatopsis

The throng that came filled the church
The box can only hold a body
A diamond, a life - the box is not the end
It can not hold a soul
Nor the numbers in our church so bold
To declare by their presence that death is not the end.

There is that which lives beyond the frame
It is our spirits that roam the earth for good or ill
It matters not that we are still
For we always live in others.

Bill Grace

A Prayer For Japan

Let us hear the planet's beat
Put tragic history to its side
We are all of red blood
Ache for a people beyond our touch
Give help as able - but first a prayer,
Just as every man is a part of the maine
How much more this proud island?
Japan - in the great darkness of these hours
 Only by prayer dare we of faith declare
 You are not alone.

Bill Grace

A Preface To The Poetry Of W. A. Grace

Perhaps this is my task in life
To filter things that touch a soul
And to hold the strains till a pen can mold
Feeling into form.

Bill Grace

A Presence Here

More lines of weight
Less frequent the presence here.
A celebration of life
More to this than strife
To write is breath itself
For those of poet soul.

Bill Grace

A Prose Piece As Poetry Eulogizing Dwight Eisenhower

'The death of President Eisenhower takes from our midst a great American, a great statesman and military leader who served our country in peace and war with sound judgment and outstanding courage.' Speaker of the House John McCormack

In Washington tonight the heart of Dwight David Eisenhower is still. He passed gently from us at 12: 25 this afternoon. President, General of the Army, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Supreme Commander of N.A.T.O., author, and former President of Columbia University; all prove an inadequate measure of the man. For Dwight Eisenhower was the embodiment of an American dream.

Only history can judge the ultimate significance of the 'Eisenhower Years'. It will have much to assess; implementation of containment, the peaceful uses of atomic energy, establishment of coexistence, the first enforcements pertaining to civil rights, the ending of the Korean conflict, and the espousal of the Eisenhower Doctrine, but perhaps most the fact that he moderated the fury of our domestic politics. Only time can validate whatever judgment we hold.

Official Washington, as well as the world, has paid profuse tribute to this great American. Richard Nixon spoke of his 'unique place in American history'. Lyndon Johnson declared him 'A giant of our age'. Truman praised his military acumen, and Hubert Humphrey his international foresight. Ted Kennedy cited his 'quiet dignity' and Earl Warren stated that he felt an illustrious chapter in world history had closed. Everett Dirksen, the Republican Senate Minority Leader, had the most definitive comment: 'The World Liked Ike.'

Yet the significance of Dwight David Eisenhower lies not in the world of Washington's movers and shakers. It lies in the genuine and sincere affection with which he was held by his fellow citizens. Of all the beautiful tributes paid to this former President the greatest was given by an anonymous negro woman who, when asked, stopped before the local television cameras and said: 'I think he was a nice man. I'm sorry he died, and I hope he goes to heaven.' Dwight Eisenhower's spirit lives in the hearts of those who knew him. There was no facade.

His intense humanity has not been lost upon us.

Bill Grace

A Second Mistaken Identity

For years I thought my face and being was real
But could never get swim goggles to truly seal
God sent lessons in the form of a child's size
Which fitting perfectly made me realize
The issue was not of degree
But where the operator's manual had tried to send me first.

Bill Grace

A Subtle And Seismic Difference

Like trying to give the world a good poem
It is a subtle but seismic difference,
This thing that achievement
May not bring success
I am grateful that Charlie Rose
Has helped me see it
Though he - I will never meet.

Bill Grace

A Tale Of And Advice To Two Teen Lovers

He was black. She was white.
Her daddy did not like the sight
Of two teens sharing sex
Who thought they were in love.
He turned eighteen and went before
The lass at sixteen stayed behind.

Now the father had this in mind
He knew the lad had crossed the line
He called it rape and may have designed
The evil that took six years of prison
From the young black's life and
Passed him into a world of strife
Placing the brand of 'sex offender'
Upon all his future days.

This tale is true, I rue, I rue.
So my young friends remremember and beware and
If for your mate you truly care
Remember the dangers of being young lovers
That should you move too fast
You can inadvertently break the happiness
Of your tandem powers.

Bill Grace

A Tale Of Two Lovers

He was black. She was white.
Her daddy did not like the sight
Of two teens sharing sex
Who thought they were in love.
He turned eighteen and went before
The lass at sixteen stayed behind.

Now the father had this in mind
He knew the lad had crossed the line
He called it rape and may have designed
The evil that took six years of prison
From the young black's life and
Passed him into a world of strife
Placing the brand of 'sex offender'
Upon all his future days.

This tale is true, I rue, I rue.
So my young friends remember and beware
If for your mate you truly care
There are dangers in being young lovers
That should you move too fast
The sin certainly is not against God
But us,
For hastening a glue
Best slow cured
As wisdom knows it helps
Relationships to last.

Bill Grace

A Thanksgiving Day Prayer For Nonbelievers At Table

Lord of our days
You who hold us
Beyond the worries of our families
Grant the peace of prayer
To still fierce doubts
That our spirits may come to yours.

Bless in these days of Thanksgiving
A heart with eyes to see
The wonder in the common place
Joy to feel that which we can not touch
And faith that defies the power in death.

May our pets protect us
From the sterileness of life
May your word guide us
Around fleas that bite
And wounds that infect.
May we know that peace
That is greater than the circumstance of the day
And may we truly be thankful
For every blessing great and small that comes.

Amen.

Bill Grace

A Thousand Beauties Seep Through The World

A quiet beauty seeps through the world
Eagle drifting over an evergreen glade
'I love you' received in gratitude spoken in truth
Prophets who acknowledge they may be wrong
Christmas caroling mother nursing her child under a blanket
Beautiful woman walking her three legged dog
Honor lived in high places
Honor lived in common places
The virgin's first night of fire
A quiet beauty seeps through the world.

Bill Grace

A Truth Canonized By Disney

'If Momma isn't happy, no one's happy.'
Is a truth canonized by Disney
That us macho premarriage males seem to learn
Is very true but only after the knot has been tied.

Bill Grace

A Truth Never Understood In Youth

It is a truth not understood in youth
That those who get to paint the queen
Do best not to presume
Upon their majestie's knowledge of subtle things
Flowers always being more safe than snake
Despite the authority of the scriptures.

Bill Grace

A Very Dirty Deal Ii

As one who owned three Chevrolet Vegas
My loyalty to: 'Buy American' - can not be deeply questioned.
Aunt Eleanor's lectures on balance of payments
Struck a deeper mark than she would ever have guessed.
The Vega despite its 'Car of the Year' status
Was a General Motors disaster.

If memory serves correctly
The press didn't seem to want to talk about it.
So, their recent drubbing of Toyota was of interest.
Perhaps the issue even greater than who owns them
Is if you have forgiven Yamamoto.

Note in Explication Isoroku Yamamoto was the Japanese admiral who
engineered the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor that galvanized American entry
into World War II.

Bill Grace

Acceptable To The Defense

I was acceptable to the defence
But not the prosecution
Which in this particular case
Needed a light switch
Not a spoiled rheostat
To assist in finding a light
In the darkness of male violence
Towards women.

Bill Grace

Adirondack Autumn (Snippets Of His Glory While I Wait 1996 Chapbook)

The mountain flames
In fire brush orange and tincture's gold,
Green malt the hills with pastel flecks
Where slate white birches
Column cathedrals of another order,
Whose luminescent leaves reveal
God's power as a simple thing.
Sunlight on a leaf that dwarfs the beauty
Of Europe's finest glass and foretells in barren form
An endless summer.

Bill Grace

Adirondack Hero

I will tell you
of a true hero
who once followed
'The Grateful Dead'
though this
I will never understand.

His studio
is in an Adirondack town.
I love his wife.

He is an artist,
entrepreneur,
visionary -
working in cloth and wood
PVC pipe and earth.

He will sleep on a
bare floor
before he will steal.
He is not politically
correct
if you can get him to speak
of politics
left or right.

If you need a
custom coat
to protect your dog
in a cold clime
write him:
Kaleb Simpson
Corinth, NY 12822
a real person
as real as these words

of praise
but please do not expect him
to give free samples
or have a factory in China.

Bill Grace

Adirondack Hot And Cold

Basic things like fire and cold
Call us from our daily mold
To discover realms we do not know
And despite not knowing
Need not to fear.

Bill Grace

Advice For A Questing Poet - Consider The Fishing Vest

Consider the fishing vest for you will need to be mobile
You never know when inspiration will strike
Your pen your paper even a dictionary may be too much
To be cased.
The vest seems to me
Perhaps the only formula for expediency.

P.S. I have had very good luck with mine ordered from L. L. Bean of Freeport, Maine if you need a source.

Bill Grace

Advice For Deploying Military

For the complexity of that world where Wal Mart does not live
Two items can be precious
A sleep mask to help with rest where there is little
An SAS Headover to help with pesky drafts
And a 1,000 other miseries you can not control.
If sixteen ounces is too much weight
Take the Headover for its veratility.

Bill Grace

Advice To A Poet At His Or Her Beginnings

Ignore the frumps who will kill you before you start:
The English teacher who shrugs at your first piece
The editors who judge
The great poverty and lack of money of the task
No, it will not support you.
You can not surrender eating to this deeper passion.

If wise you will read other poets
As painters study other painters
Louis Untermeyer helped cull my throng.
Politely disregard the many who will tell you, you are wrong.

Write, write, write on
Publish where and how you can
Refuse to be crushed.

The goal not fame or money
Some deep part of soul expressed -
This alone will grant some rest
And someday the creation of the piece
That is an experience for those who understand.

Bill Grace

Advice To A Young Poet Iv

When the spirit to write
comes upon you
you must pause and write
in the evening hours comfort
you can not conjure what was powerful
by day
but is distant by night.

Bill Grace

Advice To Young Passions (2005)

1. Don't allow them to govern.
2. Educate with Franklin's autobiography
- 3, Read, read, read!
4. Eschew TV.
5. Seek to stand in the quiet presence of those greater than yourself.
6. Observe
7. Reflect
8. Pray
9. Fellowship
10. Trust something greater than your own ego (God?) .

Bill Grace

Advice To Young Theologs In Training

When no one is looking
Slip off to the malls
There you will find true faith,
But not a people - that being blessed - are happy.
Even at the ice cream shop
With perfect evening sunlight
I can not help but see this in those who pass
Most are not happy.
They believe in a faith
You are not studying in seminary.
It does not grant them peace
Only the imperative of having more and more
Of things that do not work for peace.

Bill Grace

After A Defeat

I listen to Christian music,
do a little _____,
drink a little more than normal,
read the poet Sharon Olds,
thank God
for blessings these lines
cannot capture
even in defeat.

Bill Grace

After Hacksaw Ridge (The Film)

The next day
after seeing the cinematic genius
of Mel Gibson
I realized again
how horrible it must have been
for those who truly knew war.

My father was blessed by education
the Army had better uses for him
than carrying a rifle in the Pacific.
Many were not so fortunate.

Time will heal this piece of education
it has not been twenty four hours
and hands are shaking far less.
Yet what of those who truly carried the burden?

I can only offer a humble 'thank you.'
Make sure my Congressman knows my vote
goes to a hearty support of the VA.

Bill Grace

After Mary Ranney's Service

The night after the funeral
I am still not free
Haunted in part by her memory
The realization of early death
Only yesterday it seems
A partner at the pre-service table.
Yet from the closure of candle, bread and wine
Words from her 'bunco' circle friend ring:
'Mary, it was not your time! '

Bill Grace

After Shocks

This thing that moved Japan five feet
Has moved the world to more than prayer
When keeping the old car running
With an installation of wiper blades in Texas
Suddenly the product must come from Boston.

Bill Grace

After The Book Fair

The school's book fair storm
Has come but not yet quite gone
A clever piece of marketing
It probably is not wrong
In helping undergird the spirit
That makes capitalism strong.

Yet for its physical location
The library seems strange
Libraries being the basis of so much insight
Into even things in a democracy that are not right.
They - libraries - are sacred to me
A great help in surviving
Years of so much reading
And so little money.

We must keep the world's book fairs
For books are good,
Sometimes they lead us to my particular should -
That it is not another possession on the shelf
That leads to our greatest good -
But the costly freedom that is inside covers
Granting us the wisdom to not have to buy and buy.
There can be a peace and center from materialism's menace
That is as so many others failing to understand the human core
Raising to apostasy the Newtonian score.

Money is grand and book fairs fare
Great freedom and joy are inside those covers
Me thinks despite the societal apostasy
It is reading even more than money that makes us free
Helps us see the way that things should be
Both for ourselves and others.

Bill Grace

After The Buy

After the buy the pressure goes down,
Hands do not tremble
The virgin has been sacrificed
Bread consecrated.
Lover eyes begin to ebb - discernment begins its return
Traffic lights are red, yellow, green again
Traffic more real
Finally the question - Did I make a mistake? - (the answer)
No or Yes or Maybe
Even buyer's regret
After the buy.

Bill Grace

All Of These Things - 2005

All of these things
That come and go
Are handled best by hope
Through storm and stillness
That somehow the better spirit leads
And from this though we can not know
There is deposit for good.

Bill Grace

Amendment To A Liturgy

Given death is a
no - no
I recommend we amend
things to say:
"Remember man that thou
art star dust and
to star dust
you shall return."
A little movement
towards refocusing
a momentous matter
beyond one particular planet.

Bill Grace

American System

Remember, Oh Great One
In the American system
You are always given enough rope
To hang yourself
If you go too far.

Bill Grace

America's Post Keurig Question

The Keurig
is a model of efficiency
real and excellent coffee
almost instantly
in a cup,
its benefits no poem
can ever measure.

Yet the social pixie
in me can not help but ask:
With a few grounds more
could we not have a pot?

Bill Grace

An Ache At 36 On Palm Sunday

The media informs that
thirty six are murdered
in church in Egypt
on Palm Sunday.
Friends inform of the obscenity
before reading details in The New York Times.
Kenneth Patchen's poem
'The Deer and the Snake'
puts the ache to words.
No wonder in remembering
incorrectly
snake came out serpent
in early morning conversation.

Bill Grace

An Alphabet To Make It Go

The people who dot the I give us: i
The people who crosss the T give us: t
It takes us all to make it go
Even a visionary or so.

Bill Grace

Animals

The flower shop lady told us the story
Of her shop cat returning
With a kitten in her mouth
That became shop cat number three
That we adopted
When her little piece of capitalism
Came to an end.

Her story helps me to remember
That we are all animals
It is not just the polished elites who would be exempt
I too love to be stroked
Have nestled in more than one bed.

Bill Grace

Apology To A Poet Peer

When you asked me to serve as your mentor
I did not feel adequate to the task
 Spiritually - numbers were loved more than words
 Historically - I had not been mentored
did not trust
my own art,
sent you to: "How Does a Poem Mean"
Finished.

Hopefully there has been some growth
A local writer's critique group
 Has helped tremendously
Reading good poetry
 The library of Congress 180 List
 Has helped tremendously

Understanding that you – yourself
Are not only a poet
You are the poem
 Has helped tremendously

Understanding you may or may not
feel inspired as you write
has helped tremendously

Understanding there is a craft
to be mastered
 Has helped tremendously

Understanding it is ok to be dry
 has helped tremendously

Embracing Rilke's dictum
That you must create!
 Has helped tremendously

All this has forced me
to see myself
to forgive myself
to nurture myself
and consequently
to stay in the fight

I apologize
I did not help you
when you asked for help
this too,
 helps tremendously.

Bill Grace

Apology To Ancestors

You come to see with time
That you may have done it your way
But you did not do it all alone,
Nor are you as capable as you
Thought you were in youth.

You see Aunt Ruthie's old coffee table from forever
And discover for the first time
That it is made of solid cherry, knowing -
With a proper dash of workmanship
It can be transformed from frump to quiet elegance.

I write of more than a piece of furniture.

Bill Grace

Apology To Ted Kooser

Some poems are fillers
Think I'll desist
Believe it is not worth the risk
That Phil Hartman's gift taught me
In educating of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's domain
A body of poetry with so much abstruse
For lack of the codes
I fear you are correct
They are of no use.

Bill Grace

Archive Concern

Sometimes I fear future scholars will be in a fix
When the archives box is opened and there's only chips.

Bill Grace

Ariel Passing

The blue eyes known so long but seldom seen
Are dimmed before their time by gray hair's aura.
As a chasm looms before us
That even full years fail to anticipate
The true burden is my sister's faithfulness
I play at grief she knows too well.

But better this twilight for me
That tells of night approaching
Than a life switched off of light
With God like savagery tearing the most inward parts.

Death surely coming to claim
As coffee is sipped in Hope's Way
Black words struck to white paper
And snow in chiffon cascades
Rise off Cricket's rainbow Lake.

Bill Grace

As A Feather Descending

Soft as a feather descending
My former advisor's death is learned
I retreating to a hundred versions of 'Stabat Mater'
While against memory of the news
Majestic strains and voices play
That hint of heaven's being,
Where a nose needs no tending
Meat loaf is never the order of the day.

Bill Grace

Ash Wednesday Meditation For Catholics And Protestants Of High Liturgical Bent

Mark Lizana shared the professional insight
That the power of a sealed casket is such we turn to soup.
Which is good theology given our proclivity for hubris,
Dust being a far more dignified destiny
Than the Psalmist's King James 'breath'.

***Influenced by the classic intonement: 'Remember man that thou art dust and to dust thou shalt return' and Psalm 144.

Bill Grace

Ashes

'Remember man that thou art dust
and to dust thou shalt return, " intoned
my childhood's priest. With age has come
the simple realization that the ashes of the church
are totally different from what the interment industry
calls cremation remains or cremains,
just to antagonize me and my computer's spell check.

Bill Grace

At The Great Mall

At the great mall
after the great holiday
parking can be bought
only by a quarter mile walk
so great are the hordes
at worship.

I deliver my daughter
to this altar.

She thinks it is fun.
Dresses for it with greater
care than for church.
She is boy watching
with her girl friends.

It is a game for sure
I play at the Colorado Pen Company
the sweet nectar of acquisition
is what we believe.

The architecture gives silent testimony
to our faith.
only in the most hushed tones
is it acknowledged –
this is religion!
This is true faith!

Bill Grace

At The Royal Wedding We Were Glad

We were glad when the young royals wed
For one third of our planet's minds sped
To a time when life was dream
When we thought we were the cream
Nice for the planet to see
What secretly we all wanted to be.

Bill Grace

Aunt Eleanor Iv

Aunt Eleanor was better than most of the analysts on the street
Three days before the bottom fell out of the REITs
She proved she was no man's Market fool.
Though long ago in so many ways
Aunt Eleanor haunts me to this day.

Bill Grace

Autumn Leaves

The leaves in golds of brown and yellow
Declare a beauty greater than the daily green
Beauty always present but not always seen
That in that time before their fall
Declare a hope for us all
Of a God who publishes a thousand tongues
That this may work towards all being won.

Bill Grace

Avoiding 'you'

At the poetry seminar
the greatly honored poet
told us to avoid the word
'you'
as it makes the reader defensive.

Years later
it finally occurred to me
there is a 'you'
in Rudyard Kipling's
long loved 'If.'

So much for spending money
on learning things
you already knew
to be untrue
even if coming from a celebrated poet
with credentials.

Do I smell
the stench of money
coming through poetry's door ?

Bill Grace

Awake My Friends Awake!

Awake my friends awake
The long night's passing
New day will grant its blessing
Awake my friends awake!

Bill Grace

Back Yard Holiness

The problem with
'reverence for life'
is with the two ants
in the outside cat's
feeding bowl.

Bill Grace

Barriers

Life is barriers

The present President of the United States
knows this.

It is never easy to break through.

The cross even for Jesus was a barrier.

Bill Grace

Basic Brokenness

Perhaps it was last night's rain throwing storm
Or the oppulence of the day's wedding
Or the failure to take necessary medications
Or reflection on the sufferings of the lives in our small church
Or just my own failings come home to haunt me
But it seems there is a basic brokenness
Beyond the problems of Presidents
Living in Presidential magisterium
That even a poet can be afraid to name.

Bill Grace

Basic Humanity

After presenting pens to the garbage men
and thanking them for what they do
I returned to bed and wife
And thought those fellows on that big truck are what I believe in
Basic Humanity - perhaps saints - but probably
No greater sinner than myself
Writing poetry in bed with a nice pen after getting the garbage out.

Bill Grace

Basic Lesson

When Jesus gives his basic lesson
"violence is not cool"
not just street kids
find it hard to learn.

A sergeant kills his colonel
VIOLENCE IS NOT COOL!
Terrorists strike New York and Paris
VIOLENCE IS NOT COOL!
The United States strikes Iraq
VIOLENCE IS NOT COOL!

So -
to:
the child crushing parent,
playground enthroned bully,
steel cutting tongue classmate,
pony tail hating cop,
VIOLENCE IS NOT COOL!

VIOLENCE IS NOT COOL!
a basic lesson
almost impossible to learn.
Let our violence
be no greater
than the periods
at the end of lines.

Bill Grace

Baton Phalanx

Even in training the sound stops you
A mechanical grunt as on line they thrust forward
The young armed with batons sanctioned by authority
Like fencers practicing the forward thrust
Driving the imagined adversary back
Advancing against those
Whose ultimate good or ill
We can not imagine
But know is in our future.

Bill Grace

Beautiful Blonde In A Deep South Texas Burger King

The beautiful country blonde
in the Burger King
did not get
to speak
as duty whisked
her by
but
our eyes met
in strange
communication,
that especially a poor poet
can not
translate
into form.

Bill Grace

Beauty Quest

Although these lines are not as fair
As so many forms that claim the greater view
Not even considering the majestic things of nature's way
Whose dominion we may yet come to rue
Still in this offering there is hope of beauty too
If spirit's sweetness can perchance ever be conveyed
By something as frail as a line of soul.

Bill Grace

Beer And The Bishop

When the bishop came to talk at lunch time
The boys chose a second beer
As being their greater good
Though his words were great
And could have given real hope
In the nastiness of their situation,
The boys did not hear for they chose beer,
And I received a little hint
Of how Jesus must have felt
When the crowd chose Barabbas.

Bill Grace

Before The Morning - A Prayer To The Father Of Jesus

Author of all, fire in the burning bush - unconsumed
Grant by some grace to ask the question:
What would you have me do today?
And to answer it in faith and action
By strength beyond my own strained life
Though stained I can yet praise you through Christ.

Bill Grace

Benediction

May this evening grant you
The blessings of a new friend
May this evening grant you
Good times with an old friend.
And may this evening grant you
An intimation of an eternal friend;
Who will see you safely
To your home and loved ones.
And - if all this waits,
May the evening yet hold
A secret blessing for you.

Bill Grace

Benediction To A Core Values Class Of Military Basics (1994)

If the abiding issue is both war and peace
And I love you as my children
Having given nothing of this frame to last
My gift to you must be stronger than death,
More desirable than chocolate,
More lasting than the kiss or bite of history's moment.

So in benediction
May you know a peace
Greater than success
More powerful than happiness
Enduring as life itself
That ever in wholeness your spirit may dwell upon this earth
And jump the life to come.

Bill Grace

Benjamin Franklin Public Domain Faith Quote

'The longer I live,
the more convincing Proofs I see
of His Truth, That God governs
in the affairs of men.'

Bill Grace

Benjamin Franklin Public Domain Faith Quote II

'The longer I live,
the more convincing Proofs I see
of this Truth, That God governs
in the affairs of men.'

Bill Grace

Best Things In The House

Wife, daughter, books

Dog,2 cats,1 rat,3 fish

Computer with internet to give the world these words

Poemhunter to publish for free

Pen light to write at night

Dog to guard the door

Best Things In The House.

Bill Grace

Beta Version Remembrance Of A Fraction - Raymond Edward Godlewski

With the orders to Germany I knew that it was over
He would not stay in touch despite my grasping almost begging
The teaching years, the insurance years, the Quaker years, the chaplaincy years;

I guess it was just too much change to track.

Yet, my friend tells me I startled on learning of his death or at least turned a little white.

Ray was a word smith who could teach 'flow theory' in a few sentences.

He spoke of: 'The burden of an unlimited potential.'

He gave the paper used to run for student body president
and never betrayed a word of shadow when I lost.

We shared more than one deep love.

I think the marriage failures killed him and a soul
that was not into selling groceries.

I wish him well where ever he has gone

Perhaps God will grant us a reunion.

Bill Grace

Big City Turkey Day Paper

T-day paper,
Little color bits fuel
A hunger never filled
Something precious dies.

Preface

Perhaps this is my task in life
To filter things that touch a soul
And to hold the strains till a pen can mold
Feeling into form.

Bill Grace

Bill Clinton's Legacy

What was the budget surplus
May be the moat in his eye,
Bill Clinton was a very good actor
Half the country believed him in his greatest role
He proved to be a better lawyer
I wonder who is currently writing his scripts
Now that we can see his legacy as George W.

Bill Grace

Black And Decker (Tm) Ambush

The toaster oven turned house assassin
The switch was off - orange bright light was on
And feeling the unexpected heat
As 'Doubting Thomas' worked the switch
Unbelieving of observation.

Our sweet toaster had turned assassin
And though having missed by some greater grace
As assassins are wont to do
The house would have been the object of its fire.

Justice was summary and swift
Betraying house god to the trash was a fast throw
But despite the execution fear has lingered
Where ever did its malignant spirit go?

Bill Grace

Black And White Together

Two at dinner black and white
No longer a rare sight
Will prove they are truly tight
In weathering color blind storms
That are sure to come.

Bill Grace

Black Bean Beef

On a rare and expansive moment
I discovered black bean beef
And at this locale pronounce it good
Despite wife's disdain
Good even as a left over
Energy to help heal from drama witnessed.

Bill Grace

Black Friday – Good Friday

Black Friday did not sell:

A warm coat against the bitter snows of Valley Forge

Morphine for Gettysburg and Shiloh wounded

A patch of breathable air at Belleau Wood

Water on Baton's march through hell

A meal eaten in safety in Iraq

An antidote to burns and broken bones

That make Afghanistan a life long thing

Black Friday is not Good Friday

Good Friday does not sell

In fact, Jesus gave it all away.

Bill Grace

Black Friday In The Fabric Store

Burly men with their mothers,
sisters, wives, lovers male and female – come.

I misunderstand my instructions.
I am to keep her place in the long
check out line – a son around which
earth rotates gathering in
ever greater bolts of 'good deal' fabric.

Calico and shoulder pads, moleskin
and dual duty thread call from their shelves.

Young lovers wait
in the long check out line,
women kibitz with one another,
with some there is discussion
of the complexities of fabric
custom sewing.

One fellow states: "I don't like fabric."
He may speak for many
but not for all
he is the bold one
in a fabric store
filled with men and women
on Black Friday.

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Bill Grace

Black Sheep Black Cat

As the black sheep of my family
Perhaps it is no accident
I have this thing for the black cat
Not that I don't love the gray one
But it never occurred to me until the black one
For fear of the Satanists
That I had the power to turn off Halloween
For a cause of love.

Bill Grace

Bling Notebook

Giving my daughter a hard time
About her love of "bling"
It is interesting
I have succumbed
To her great wisdom
Of sixteen years
And am presently writing
In a notebook
Primarily characterized
By a "bling" cover.

Bill Grace

Blood And Ink

Blood and ink
Neither can be stored
Both call out for more
Least threatening when both are dried
Antithesis of the struggle for which Jesus tried.

Bill Grace

Bob Kimball`s Wisdom

In the great writing project

During the great freeze some would call writer`s block

Bob Kimball broke the ice with his advice

That enabled a river of words to flow:

` `Just write. Write! Do not judge.` `

Much like Ken Lane two decades before

Honoring adequacy, teaching me to steer

Around the hyper critical that destroys.

Bill Grace

Bob Whelan Poetry - The Songs We Sing

At youth's verdant door

I sang:

Of love,

Of sorrow

Of heroism and honor -

all that I had so little seen.

At the " I crooned of lost opportunity,

lost ambition,

yet full of pride.

At age I sing softly

of all that has been,

of all I am grateful for,

and the eternal score

which is to come.

Bill Grace

Bob Whelan's Business Card Summa Theologica

God is!

Prayer works!

Jesus came.

Life is worthwhile!

You are forgiven.

There is always hope.

Eternity started yesterday!

Love!

Bill Grace

Bob Whelan's Rules For A Teenage Daughter

1. Dad is always right. Dad is always wrong.
2. Dad is very loveable.
3. Love, love and puppy chow!
4. Spoil them and they will be picky about boys.
5. No hand - me - downs.
6. They must have all the electronic toys that their buddies have.
One hope, in five years (Dads) - your IQ will go up twenty points.

Bill Grace

Bolshoi Moscow (2005)

I never knew how much movement could communicate
Was struck by Giselle more than lovers holding hands
And retrospectively have a penitential prayer of gratitude,
That we didn't blow each other up
Though we came extremely close
As two honest Secretarys have informed us.

Bill Grace

Boomerang Books

My wife - the elementary school librarian
tells stories of boomerang books
whose circuit sometimes
is a matter of years
with boxes that harbor the truant
frequently props in this drama
of lost and found.
Brothers and sometimes even sisters
play bit parts
with these corpuscles
of intellect's blood
that help keep
my old brain alive.

Bill Grace

Bragging Rights

We would do well in shopping
To remember there is a cost that attends bragging rights
Sometimes those superior savings
Can be tremendously expensive.

Bill Grace

Bread And Butter

Sometimes not enough is said
About a miracle known as bread

- Add butter -

□

on earth as most can come.

As close to heaven

Bill Grace

Breakfast At La Madeleine

McNay days almost always start
With breakfast at La Madeleine
A chance to start the day a little better
The dance of fireplace flame
Perhaps chord wrapping of the chairs
Classic displacing Muzak
Warmth of egg and ham set against quiche pastry
Or pouring self a steaming cup of the coffee of a better sort
I can not tell you why for sure
But the day starts better
With breakfast at La Madeleine.

Bill Grace

Brent Sherman

Where are you?
How are you doing?

Bill Grace

Broken Ice Maker

God grants to us a running refrig
It is the ice maker that is broken
Cost of repair too much.
My Puritan genes recoil
Wife and daughter do not understand
Why Dad does take a stand
Our own ice we will make.
In old time trays cust to fit
Our cubes produced in an appropriate niche.
Life made a little less mechanical
To slow us down and help remember
It is not just ice machines that end.

Bill Grace

Building On Spinoza

Spinoza said God
was the sum of all mind and matter
a more reverent definition may be
God
is beyond all mind and matter
and
Jesus
becomes even more important
because
he was mind and matter
and we have heard
about his strangeness.

Bill Grace

Bumper Sticker Observation A 20 Sept 2010

Observed on a significantly larger than average size Texas pick up truck with plate reading 'TEX, ' 'I would rather hunt with Dick Cheney than ride with Ted Kennedy.'

Bill Grace

Burning Love Letters A Conjecture

I have read of those who burn their letters
Perhaps at death or verge of war or other extremis
I can only conjecture as one
Who never fully found communion with a woman
And failed for lack of sex when it was mine
That the union was so perfect and sublime
When lost there was nothing left – not even history
But papers conversion to living flame
In appropriate memorial and fair well
For what had been and voyeur eyes denied.

Bill Grace

Burton & Taylor

Burton was questing
Liz happy to be
the clash of these currents
produced the marriage casualty.

Bill Grace

Cap Colonel

The colonels are the captives of the generals
And generals of presidents
And presidents of nations -
Not even the top dog is truly free -
These are only the things that we can see
And so much more transpires beneath the surface
That we can only truly know with time and history.
In the interval we must hope that
There is more than the passion of the moment
Some place of calm unknown
That beckons through the call of eons against all odds.

Bill Grace

Carl Jung And Harry Potter In Fantasy

If Carl Jung were with us
Someone would flag Harry Potter for him
I can not conjecture on the books
I see Jung quipping: "Not a bad transformation of my work! "
Jung's favorite scene being in the final film
When Harry nose to nose with Voldemort
Puts his arms around him and jumps into an abyss
Light embracing darkness, with self the sure sacrifice
It builds well on Socrates and knowing self,
The payoff in such a leap being
That both survive the fall and live to fight another day.

Bill Grace

Carlyn's Poem (1976 Chapbook) (Density *****)

'Seven Golden Daffodils' came to me
And peace to try at poetry
'Seven Golden Daffodils' touched my days
A life reshaping in new ways.

Orange sun and frosted mount
Emerald isles in silver laced seas
White sloop from fable named Halcyone.

Wine that caught the fire's glow
Enchanting melodies from silver strings
Golden flames - cracked sparks to fling.

Faces that returned a smile
Friendship warming as a child
Flying feet on oaken floors
All of this and even more.

Bill Grace

Carry Permit (Density ****)

The cat has kept her claws
The dog's always been a bud
(But there have been exceptions)
If domestic violence is down
Is it because the cat has kept her claws?

Bill Grace

Casualties Of Civic Duty

Given the metal detectors, long and rushed lines,
unfamiliar surroundings, and general intimidation
of a big city court house for a country boy,
I count my blessings that the casualties were only three:
One steel fork as weapon I did not guess
Knowing a pencil can serve as shive;
One Fisher bullet space pen gift;
Respect for politicians who lack the courage
To face the color gray.

Bill Grace

Cat Encounter

Our stray cat who blodied my nose
Plays by rules but ones almost no one knows
While this kitty did not mean to be a felon
Drawing blood is not so nice
So I've become more careful to try and insure
This event will not happen twice.

Bill Grace

Cat Intuition

Cats sense fairly well
Whether we wish them good or ill
Which given the way things work
Is a necessary instinct for cat survival.

Bill Grace

Cat Poem #3

Berkeley California is a long way from Freeville New York.
Boston not so far, my father made that trip.
For me a longer journey. Dad never knew that he was poor.

'Invictus' is not correct.
That poet knew John Wayne before the cinema had its power
to hlep inform our vision.

The cat comes and asks for time
I stroke her back, encourage her claws from flesh,
listen to her motor -
Wish there had not been so many years with out her
Fulfill the mandate of these lines.

Bill Grace

Cat Protocol

Cat Protocol

Watching the cats eat I was surprised to learn
They use a protocol not seen since army infantry days
That the most powerful and senior cat –
In effect the commander cat - eats last.

Bill Grace

Cat Purrs

Cat purrs
kitten plays
night ends
MORNING!

Bill Grace

Cat, Wind And I

Cat, wind and I
Enjoy a warm Texas night
The city sounds that lack extreme
The absence of those dissonances
That are so mean
The moment of silence to sense
The wonder each one feels but can not speak.

Bill Grace

Cats In The Garden Of Eden

Intuition tells me there were cats in Eden
before the fall
not just the great creatures of the artists.
Adam had a problem,
these were prideful animals
who would bring him offerings.

Birds of fan tail feathers:

Purple, blue, red, yellow, orange

Wondrous song

taken as prey,
not food -
there was no need.
It was pride itself
the cats placed
at Adam's feet
these treasures more worthy
for a Good Friday offering.

Bill Grace

Caution To Morning's Fast Risers

A word with you jack rabbit riser
There have been some studies on extended longevity
It seems there is a pattern to those who break 100
They do not erupt from tender sleep's deep grasp
But slowly gather self from morning's haze
Perhaps not fearing quite so much a world
Over busy and becoming more so,
With God's present exile for many,
If you will forgive a conjecture
From this pen basically concerned for the world's fast risers.

Bill Grace

Celebrating Stephen Kuusisto

Every twenty – thirty years
I meet someone
like sun
when met coming out of a deep
and long prison
in astonishment I blink
from its impacts
or perhaps
just write poetry.

Professor Kuusisto
can be packaged –
but it is a violence –
he appreciates his freedom
more.

We liked his face.
We liked his dog.
We liked his humor.
We liked the way:
he judged us as an audience
assisted a good energy
provided a win-win for all.

I like the work
of his honor students.
I like the nonchalant
way he chose his audio
poem for the "Cortland Review."
I love the selection
read to us from his
Eaves Dropping. (W. W. Norton)

I may even love his homework
to read
Poetry as Survival.
I love his balance
in accepting a stranger
and

I will bet you a dollar
there is very little he imitates
or seeks.

This man who
loves writing,
rises early
and understands
its terrible demands.

Blind man helping me to see
the Marxian roots of "disability"
more than a lesson in etymology
from flesh touching flesh
a call to 'the big life'
reminiscent of another who knew strife
hope so strong once forged
it triumphs over circumstance
it triumphs over what is real.

Bill Grace

Celebrating The Late Life Church Years Of Louise Burnam Jones - A Post Death Fairwell

I do not know why I loved her,
Perhaps some rare transmutation of eros
From my sixty years of frame to her eighty plus.
Perhaps that she truly needed that handicap
spot at the front of the church so clearly,
I never begrudged it to her even once.
Perhaps because she was a pillar of the place
That called the present pastor that I love.
Perhaps because on occasion she moved
with so much obvious pain,
yet I never heard her complain, even once.
Could it be because she was a teacher of so many years
a trade I truly trust?
Or that she taught at home and church
quietly gave so much good?
With us and then gone
A fast sinking ship
No time to say: 'So long! '
I grieve her timely passage
and know it is my own.
No time to say: 'So long! '
I guess I'll say it here
And hold the tear.

Bill Grace

Celebrating The Wisdom Of The Poet Edward Field

Uncle Don told me in one of those moments of intimacy
When he was not speaking ex-cathedra
: Your father followed the way of his heart.:
It was a nice share and I am grateful for it
Coming from an authority as great as the Uncle Don
so many of us have.

Bill Grace

Celebration Of A Child (2005) (Density *****)

Ladies and Gentlemen: It gives me great pleasure
To present to you: Elena Ivanova Krivolapova
Who has been with us quite a while
And rather inappropriately ignored
But she is living proof that love has more power than nations
And a child is a center
Worthy of our attentions.

Bill Grace

Center For The Intrepid – San Antonio, Texas

To see the young
Without their legs
To hear their humor
To learn how a tattoo
Has helped one through
Is to go to another planet
Return humbled
With how little you truly know
Realizing
These were not even
The Gold Star mothers
Who had moved
The foundation of your life.

Bill Grace

Chance Encounter Or God Winks

Under the spell of The Colonel
whose life is stronger
than death's portent,
I met her.

Fell instantly in love.

Yes
a very attractive woman -
teacher -
30ish
who served me,
her pumpkin bread
prepared for the class,
entwined silver band
upon a left ring finger.

I could not be less
than her,
etiquette in church
is binding.

I took the glance
from her electronics
and her pumpkin bread
said 'thank you'
tried not to betray
the deeper passion of the moment
that stirred within as I quick scampered
for the door
without so much
as thank you
or fair well.

A promise to keep.
Circle of gold
upon my own
left finger.

Chance Encounter With The Young

Seated in the restaurant's bar section
Early twenties they entered
He with nicely developing beard not yet full
She with breasts denying
Her nipples the right to exit
With fabric she framed her statement
Here is my beauty here is my power.
The statement was not vulgar
Our eyes caught for half a second
There was no agenda to her glance,
She was not selling liquor or herself
She says here is my beauty
I say silently with wife beside me – Amen.

Bill Grace

Change And Complexity

It is just one of the complexities of our age
That you always have to count your change.

Bill Grace

Chaplain Candidate Class

That class produced four full colonels that I know of
The one we would have elected class president
Ended up in Leavenworth on a bad rap by his wife
I have seen the old photograph of us at the Chaplain School
But the one I remember best
Is the one of virtue we would have elected class president.

Bill Grace

Chapters

One chapter closes and another begins
Sometimes it can not help but feel as sin
Sometimes the relief is so great -
The chapter so heavy
It can only with comrades be opened again.

Bill Grace

Charles Schulz

I listen to savants on Charlie Rose
Discussing complexities of North Korea
After a somewhat failed missile launch and think
How fortunate for the world that Charles Schulz failed
To work for Disney his pen having given us Linus et. al.
Where Linus boldly proclaims on the glass from which I drink:
'The quest for security is no picnic! '

Bill Grace

Charlie Rose At The Movies

When Charlie tries to hustle movies
He is at his worst despite honorable effort
Like this poet trying to sell insurance
It worked and works but only barely.

Bill Grace

Charlie Rose For Lent

I have given up Charlie Rose for Lent
The sparkling cognoscenti of the world
It is my terrible atonement
For all my sins of knowing
When I have known so little
While suspecting even less
Of sin's great power to rule.

Bill Grace

Charlie Rose Has A Chuckle

Being almost television addiction free
Even the Conventions I limited
To the speeches of Obama and McCain
There is the exception of the Charlie Rose show
Which steers much more than the movies I elect not to see.
It is the style of television that I hope will keep us free.
If vigilance for our freedom will yet be
It is the thing that makes us worthy of its keeping.

Bill Grace

Chasing The Ice Cream Truck - A Happy Poem

My friend says to me:
"Write a happy poem."
Not being sure where they come from
I say
sure
but do not know for sure
that I can keep my word
with even words,
as the case may be.

Walking the dog
in that pleasant end of day time
the merry sound of the ice cream
truck
anoints the evening
with a tin jingle -
from a side street
it careens around the corner
and disappears.

Again, I do not know from where -
I think she had black hair -
youthful
slightly buxom
fresh
flushed face beauty
and beauty to be
she is running - south
from my north,
"Which way did the ice cream truck go? "
she demands.

Pell-mell she proceeds in pursuit
to catch and be caught
by her happy prey.

I wonder if
God was listening,
for a happy poem came

as well as a pretty girl
with flowing black hair
on a pleasant evening
walk,
I would capture here.

Bill Grace

Cheeries And Black Coffee And Morning

The morning air tells of late evening storm
A 'Westy' stray proofs the power of its terror
Cheeries and black coffee and morning and a need to write.

Bill Grace

Child's Surprise

Mother would approve this use of wealth
This bringing of child to distant land
And claiming as one's own,
If through a different process.
I think she would approve even to
The very bed in which she sleeps
Was once her own and now furthers life
So near day break's horizon crest
I can not with hold a gasp of wonder
In receipt of blessing
Of this surprise.

Bill Grace

Chuck E Cheese Counter Lady

It is my night to watch the kids,
Chuck E Cheese to the rescue.
The young woman at the door
Greets us with the attempt of a mechanical smile
Proceeds to our dark blue light anointing.
Much later –
It is the older woman at the cash out counter
My daughter is negotiating
I am ease dropping
To my surprise she remembers to say 'thank you.'
I am not patient.
Check off another job for which I am not suited
Chuck E Cheese counter lady.
Finally, this mini-Versailles is over.

Bill Grace

Church Vote

YES - 50, NO - 3

The way of congregational polity
May not be the way to eternity
Even should the majority
Be proven to have acted correctly
If three are not divinity
I wonder at our theology.

Bill Grace

City Election

With two friends running for election
I see the pain with unusual clarity
The disappointment in learning
That great endorsements are purchased
At a cost of honor, and populist philosophy
Counts little in the whirl
Of the great mosaic of special interests.

My deeper debt has earned his spurs
Took on an incumbent so well fortified
He only had to breathe to win
And understands the power
In humble house to house solicitation.

Perhaps in all this drama
The sadness is I have only one lawn
With which to display proclivity
And secrecy does not shield from decision's pain
When two men seek an office same.

I can only hope idealism's champion
Will stay his course and take the drubbing
Master the bitter lessons of vision's call
And like my likely winning friend learn
That he too can fight another day.

Bill Grace

City's Evening Sidewalk

Against the traffic's constant hiss of the artery around her
The sun casts buildings into mellow shades of their evening hues
Wife and daughter search for thrift store treasures and
Another approach in a tongue not my own.

I am impressed by the beauty of the younger's face, her breasts, the confident
manner with which she moves and
The intensity of the mother's words, her worried demeanor, her gaunt red eyes -
Only their walk is cadenced -
Everything else speaks of two planets
Held in their orbits by a gravity I can not see.

Bill Grace

Clinton's Legacy

Bill,

Although rather liking you,
And having heard the rumor of your great charm,
That when this thing about legacy is sifted through
One of the nuggets I suspect you left us was George W.

Bill Grace

Close To Day

I will not rattle around much more tonight
It would just give the wife a terrible fright.

Bill Grace

Coffee And Candle Light

Coffee and candle light is how I start each day
Seeing the girls off to school
A little prayer of safety
For the treachery on busy roads.
But before the time of prayer
Before Rembrandt's great icon*
Before the planner starts to rule the day
Before Bob Kimball's poetry
Or even scripture's great gifts
There is coffee and candle light
And almost always it is good.

Bill Grace

Coffee As Morning Drug

It is caffeine for sure
But even more the ritual
Which with brain baked
From sleep that does not rest
Gives power to my primary drug -
Achievement, a thing modest and fulfilling
As a decent cup of coffee
Which keeps me from those other drugs
That guard the gates of a hell
Where all are welcomed in.

Bill Grace

Color Question

Can I publish
in color?

No -?

No.

Bill Grace

Colors Of Darkness

I come with pen Lord
As some saint of old would pray
Hear dog and furnace
In the bastion of the night
How can I justify the air I breathe?
On a planet lost to seeth
In so many colors of darkness?

Bill Grace

Commercial Judas

The picture in the ad lures me in
A thirteen mile drive it is a sin
To learn the picture is a lie
A truth I learn only when I spy
An item that is a quest.

I do not mind the puffer's art
But still it gives my soul a start
To learn the desire of my eyes
Is not to be fulfilled.

I don't expect too much today
Am grateful for a pleasant stay
Still I wonder at some of the commercial arts
Whose lack of ethics stink like a fart.

Bill Grace

Company Store

It came as quite a painful revelation
After years of loyalty to the company store
To discover that the store was more loyal to the store
Than the workers who keep it afloat.

Bill Grace

Compass Poem #1

Love your life
Even if you must search to find it
Richard Bach owned an airplane
Even when he was broke.

The issue is neither sex nor money
They are the great static
On the television screens of our lives
The things that will destroy us
If we focus upon them too much.

There is a deeper chord
That will see you through
There is no safe harbor
Only a relative freedom where you can see
The fin of the shark approaching.

If you are to love your life
You must love what you do
Richard Bolles can help
But the burden is yours
To live in or climb from purgatory
Even as a baby's diaper stinks.

Bill Grace

Compassion In A City Called Corpus Christi

Much to my shame I have lost his name
That good dentist so long ago
In the land of Corpus Christi
Who fixed my teeth for free
And did it with such elegance and skill
He not only allowed me to keep my dignity
But proved to this poor pastor then
That men of mammon are not all men of sin
And that not all ministering to the human race
Carry the big REV. before their name's most forward place.

Bill Grace

Complaint

My daughter says: 'I'm cold.'
She does not know the privilege
Of her South Texas July complaint.

Bill Grace

Compound Kid

The cute young woman in her Honda
Does not think of her gated community
As a compound, a.k.a. 'the Kennedy compound'
I can not read her mind
But this real estate has a powerful message
"I am not united to you. Your problems are not mine.
Here I am secure from who you are."
Great bars of moving iron seal my isolation from yours,
Enforce the tyranny of the sensate as a lie.

Bill Grace

Confession 71

I am
at 71
the captive
of pills.

Bill Grace

Confession To Jung

In my soul less and less of fright
Less inclination to strike against perceived night
Learning to live beyond or better with anxiety
A collective lure of buried lights
The world composed of such untold variety
What I see as crazy is another's sobriety.

Bill Grace

Constantine

Something extraordinary happened
A peasant preacher's influence
Would reach in about three hundred years and odd
A future Roman emperor
Who would in symbol of crossed sticks
Conquer and go on to rule
The issue not being the tactical sagacity of Constantine
But his sensitivity to what had developed
Under the surface of his times.

Bill Grace

Contemporary Retrospect On Sex

Sex has always created controversy
Look at King David - Mercy! Mercy!
Far more than bring us children
It riles the body politic
Especially in matters of presidential or public education.
But Madison Avenue is no fool
It uses sex subliminal or direct as a tool
To help us worship with money offerings
To many a commercial ghoul.
It's enough to make a fellow think and think again,
There's more to this sex stuff than simply sin!
So some might hope it will go away
But I'll make a bet that it will stay
And for myself rather than looking for a fray
Acknowledge its great enduring porwer
For evil or good or even play.

Bill Grace

Conversation With A D.A.

He was a very civil man careful to give thanks
For a well brewed cup of coffee.
We talked about a world not so civil and
levels of battery recognized in law.
We talked about education and the brutality of excellence.
We talked about hunting hogs and their quality as sausage.
This man with the shirt that declared an identity
Was good company even before breakfast and good conversation.

Bill Grace

Conversation With A District Attorney

He was a very civil man careful to give thanks
For a well brewed cup of coffee.
We talked about a world not so civil and
levels of battery recognized in law.
We talked about education and the brutality of excellence.
We talked about hunting hogs and their quality as sausage.
This man with the shirt that declared an identity
Was good company even before breakfast and good conversation.

Bill Grace

Conversion

It occurred to me while loading pills
How much life had changed from days of youth
When loading would have meant a magazine
With which to harry crow or fox.

One spring break was memorable
Twenty three wood chucks were taken with varying forms of guile
I can not even imagine such carnage being recreation now
For one who delights in close proximity of deer.

Too much of anger, fear and youth has passed
With a vision of place upon a different planet
Than when hope was standing in the center of the whirl.
The innocence too is gone,
When the word 'survival' was something only for artic explorers
And others too fool hardy to imagine.

Bill Grace

Conversion On The Trail

The glass that throws colors
Pink, blue, green, orange, red
With a power greater than florescence
Charms me most in darkness
In bright sun has almost no power
To even lightly charm this soul.

My daughter would be distraught,
That ownership rights being both emphasized
and honored in our clan,
She was not even consulted
In her father's appropriation
Of a toy converted into beer glass.

In the darkness of the world -
(Those who rebel against it
Or at least in the word of Bergman's squire - 'protest')
A few may find an allegory here -
My form almost certainly not charming enough for poetry's sphere.

Despite the bashing
Given by those who do not understand
The issue comes to 'son' and 'sun.'
Jesus has light to give in our darkness
A truth transcending even the transparency of saints.

Trophies have great power that the hymn writer understands.
Car, house, title, wife - can serve as well as anything on any mantel.
For some having little else they become the idols of worship.
The world is a hungry place,
Jesus can not change this, but perhaps the issue is:
If we take his blue print seriously
This makes it much more difficult and likely
That we will not eat each other.

Bill Grace

Cop Breakfast

The police eat breakfast
Like everyone else
A call comes - they go
The waitress brings me a coffee
With water intended for two.

Bill Grace

Corgy Theology

My dog can not protect me
From that which has dominion
Over him and history.

And even ink that can triumph over time
Spares us little when we are done
Is frail to inspiration's moment
A pale and inadequate thing.

Else the struggle to live the Gospel would not be
An order of such magnitude and easily done.

So let us celebrate fish for breakfast
Keep God ever in the center of our pain and joy
And like Bergmann's Seventh Seal Squire - Protest!
While smiling nicely back at death.

Bill Grace

Corrected Counsel To A Canine From A Superior Being

Noteing how you treat the cats
In depth of night from day
And noteing the vast difference in treatment
I must address these words to your attention.

First, we must discuss your over vigilance,
That has nothing to do with security
And everything to do with extorting more than
The established one milk bone limit
The cats do not appreciate this phony zeal
Nor do I now that I am wise.

Second, you refuse to share
Your upstairs observation ledge with the cats.
In grim display of power
Worthy of Hitler and Stalin's spirit.

I am not pleased - and remember the Red Sea -
There could be consequences.

Signed,

God

Bill Grace

Credo

Although the poet's sing against the dark
death's power is far too stark
and we can only live the day
and with out harm to others
make it ours to play.

Bill Grace

Critter Cookies

The critter came and stole my cookies
The evidence of bag was left behind
A matter of no little spine
Given the closeness to the house
My fear is even greater
When I think it was a mouse.

Bill Grace

Customer Service

The metric gurus
Do not understand
The magic in customer service.
Buying bread in Walmart
I experience again
What I have found
In gun shops and a thousand
Other unspeakable places,
The hunger to please you
As a customer.

For a moment
You are not a datum
But something special
That will wait a week
Travel half a county
To buy a loaf of bread.

Bill Grace

Dad's Boom Box

Dad's boom box was a carillon
That filled His valley with sweet strains
Built of back yard melted metal scraps
Time and market savy
It was in part the harbinger of reason
That at his death his mourning staff insisted
On 'the good shepherd' being the motif to set in glass
Despite his lack of ordination by or for a flock.

Bill Grace

Daily Blessing

I give my blessing to the world daily
Not from Rome but from Paris
Where the Poemhunter server lives
Not from a balcony high above the masses
But here as you read and
I struggle to write on your heart
I give my blessing to you daily.

Bill Grace

Dance Of The Weasel

The evening rate being a reduced thirty five
I never even guessed how much would not thrive
Of what the great play park normally offered.

It made me wonder yet again at how great institutions
Succeed in the way in which they strive
To present themselves so well
As they cast their public spell
When fine print seems the true order of the day,
Integrity - the thing most frequently lost amid their herds.

Bill Grace

Daniel Berrigan, Sj - Remembered

Passing your door at Cornell
it said "come in
and let me make your acquaintance, "
but I was in a hurry
and did not stop,
Mommy and Daddy
being far more important
to appease.

Meeting you in Berkeley
you were cold
and I was shallow liberal,
neither of us were impressed,
the door remained closed.

As one who tries at poetry
I can only salute you
knowing that as big a name
as Marianne Moore
spotted your great talent -
gave your fame a push.

If the spirit
of Berkeley's encounter
was correctly sensed -
is correctly remembered -
you did not give a damn
because of being held
by something much greater
than your own ego
and a student's need
to listen and admire.

Bill Grace

Daniel In The Diner's Den

Across our chasms we met
His arms covered with tattoos
My arms Anglo white - needle untouched,
As we warmed he told of early years in an institution
Where his words had moved all the girls to tears
He said it changed his life -
This realization that words could count.
I presumed to play the mentor.
He accepted the role as student.
'Who do you think is our greatest poet? '
He granted the grace for me to think.
After a while I reminded him Homer was a poet.
Then I sliced this Gordian Knot with the dated name
Of Louis Untermeyer's great anthology fame.
All of this as he played fuhrer to the menu
and jockeyed servings for four.

'Poets stick together! '
Skin and sex and a million other variables
Are best excluded from this formula.

Bill Grace

Darth Vader At The McNay

Running through the impressionist landscape exhibit
Darth Vader was caught from the corner of my eye
I did not stop to obviously spy
Or nicely comment to him on his cape's superior quality
It was not Halloween.

So dark this multimedia work of Robert Morris – 31
He had to leave it untitled
Put no corral upon its dark power
I can not tell – Dresden – Tokyo – perhaps World War II,
Research makes me guess
His sense of nuclear Armageddon approaching.

Some years before we came so close with Cuba
It was and is no joke this nuclear thing
This thing the artist can sense
That requires good but antithetical politicians to avoid
To keep a real Darth Vader from striking a McNay or Hermitage
Something as worthy of the struggle as an artist's palette.

Bill Grace

Daughter Art

It comes as some surprise
At having the opportunity and missing the Peggy Guggenheim
And carry the regret a decade plus
That a patch of curled ribbons
Not meriting an amateur's second glance
Could be a source of such delight
And these paraded - not even presented!

Bill Grace

Daughter's Evening Before Tests

Testing evening is the night before the tests
When daughter goes to bed before the early hour
And I relect on old percentile scores
That couldn't be maintained through out my space
Even before learning of the foolishness that made my day's a race.

Bill Grace

Daughter's One Morning Litany

Would you like an egg?

No thank you.

Would you like some orange juice?

No thank you.

Would you like some milk?

No thank you.

Would you like a hot chocolate?

No thank you.

Would you like some toast?

Yes, please.

Bill Grace

David Halberstam's Bond

The man I criticized in Harper's is dead
And a little piece of me is with him gone.
He the Pulitzer winner and I never out of bush league,
This plus more than years our seperation,
Our bond our love of word on page.
Things that time has told that lead to deeper truth.

Bill Grace

Day In And Day Out

Sometimes just day in and day out
Leaves very little about which to shout.
The ordinariness which is our days
May be the tribute to that something
that just may stay.
So do not despair when your muse leaves you dry -
Go mow the lawn - she'll be back bye and bye.

Bill Grace

Day Slice

The cell phone rings
the call is from Florida
we live in Texas
"This is Mr. Jay Anderson
you have won 1,000,000 dollars."
I tap the screen's end call button
before a second breath.

Bob has loaned
one of the sixteen hundred pens
in his collection.
He has helped me to see again
the beauty of the 'Parker 75' series.
I have helped him remember
France
is a part of N.A.T.O.

The Orvis jacket has been sent back.
It has taken over a year.
I did not know U.P.S.
would make a home pick up.
I did not know
the post office
with an account
would do the same.

Bob shares 'Eureka' from the
Wall Street Journal
of 19 March 2014,
he shares a wonderful piece
of Wordsworth's capacity
for narrative.

The ink flows
from pen to paper.
For me it is a wonder
this thing of a pen
that smoothly puts ink on paper.
Lets me tell my friend publicly

'thanks' for the loan
I will treat it with care
return it
safely to you
to its nest
with 1,600 others.

Bill Grace

Dead Sparrow

Like Cleopatra among her cats I sit
Waiting for the Time-Warner Man
My lifelong friend - a brother figure for sure - tells me
The dead sparrow on the front porch,
Tells - the killer cat likes me.
Sometimes I cannot help but wish
I was less popular.

Bill Grace

Death Defined To A Three Year Old

Grandma is going on a long long trip.
She is safe. She does not hurt. We can not join her.
The place she is going is very special and it moves.
We will see her again but we don't know when.
It is a secret.
Please trust me.
We will see her again,
but we don't know when.
Trust me.

Bill Grace

Death Defined To A Three Year Old Codicil By The Rev. K. R. Simpson

They are where we can not see them
they live in our hearts.
Ken taught second and third grade for many years.

Bill Grace

Death In Distant Family

Wendy was beautiful and disturbed
A beauty the photographs could only barely capture
Wife's sister barely known is dead.
It is not her release from pain that unsettles me,
Nor the savage swiftness of her transition's last developments,
It is the simple realizations:

That something in me loved her
Loved the fantasy like you love a movie star
Or a magazine model -
Or a woman so striking only a mogul could own her -
So rare the physical perfection;

The young son left behind enhancing an in the bone realization,

That Death does not negotiate and can not be reversed;
Demanding the writing of late night scribbles
To restore some semblance of capacity for sleep.

Bill Grace

Death Of Big Blue

Big Blue has died an old fish death
Daughter also informed of his passing
Perhaps the trauma of an out of tank jump,
Perhaps the escaping memory of the years we had him,
Even the tough Beta's life is short,
Although this one we will remember for his beauty.

Bill Grace

Death Of The 25\$ Heb Coffee Cup Experiment

I have not investigated with Holmes like certainty

Why it is gone but it is no more.

The honor system box to receive my quarter has disappeared
and with it the supply of small styrofoam cups.

'You can purchase a medium or large coffee, ' the nice clerk
informs me.

I have refill privileges and take the medium.

Will the anonymous woman with the travel mug ever return
to discover her retribution?

Will the nice lady with the travel mug inquire of the nice clerk
which size is this - medium or large?

I do not know.

This is why I do not sell poetry but it is not free.

Bill Grace

Death Of The Great Man

Along with the requests for money
comes the email news
of the death of the great man.

I think it was the other
great man I asked for help
and was denied.

Yes, there were two great men
I remember now.

One I admired from afar
the other I asked for help
and was denied –
two great men.

Bill Grace

Debt To A Once Stranger (Dale Ivy) While Traveling

Mindless, the trip's early morning departure.
The critical gear of cell phone left behind
No where as serious as the Gatling guns Custer left behind
God's opportunity to further learn
From the great lessons of grace that await.

Bill Grace

Decent Men

There is a decency in the world
It does not stop death
But if memory is preserved it is stronger than death.

Karl was a grave digger and the foreman
Of a crew right out of 'Mice and Men.'
I remember his call as a teen,
When chill had taken me
From opening the sweet earth
With too little understanding.

Small thing a toll call from Groton to Dryden
Long before the word cellular was ever heard
A small thing but decent for Karl was truly poor.
He did not have money for toll calls,
But Karl was a decent man.

Dave Carter is a decent man.
He gave a kidney to a friend to live.
My mission must be prayer
That God will see him safely through and home again,
If all goes well they will see each other every day at work.
Only Greek is strong enough to hold an act called 'agape.'
For Dave Carter is a decent man.

Ron Fogleman is a decent man famous to a few.
Helpful to men he never knew in face but understood in form.
I have a hunch about all those combat missions in Nam.
A decent man, they were not flown for gain or glory.
Ron Fogleman is a decent man.

I wonder when God judges me
If he will hold his standard against the likes of these?
I pray he won't for words can not compete with deeds
For these are decent men but of far greater sum.

Bill Grace

Deep Throat - 7

Even the title offends for those of long memory
And it is strange the Ivory gal would forfeit
Her crown to make bad film.

The current scene where money boldly takes
The center stage is no less obscene
Than other things that should be left as private.

Bill Grace

Desecration Of History At The National Cathedral

In the case of Jackson
I know little
the seminary professor
transformed by the alchemy of war
to be Lee's eyes.

Of Lee a little more
his sadness at the end
an integrity keeping the nation
from guerilla war,
best General of the big four.
Lincoln offered him the Union command.

A desecration of history
this removal of their National Cathedral presence
I would we leave them there as reminder
of sin and sectionalism and economics desperate power
to override those truths that now are spoken.

Bill Grace

Diet

The trouble with a diet is that
The ouch of leaving behind
So many nice things that lead to fat!

Bill Grace

Discovering Luigi Cherubini On 9/11's Tenth

The terrorists were very happy with bringing hell to earth
The Chaplain so depressed his General injected consolation
So when the devils did their work so well
Who but God could know that ten years later
That same chaplain would hear His angels sing.

Bill Grace

Disneyland At Half Past Youth

These molten words will change but Disneyland will always be divine
This Kingdom Khrushchev could not enter
A great magnet for older wallets and youthful minds
And entertainment some find sublime.

500,000,000 is quite a throng
So nothing could be terribly wrong
To view and play this entertainment Mecca
And for a moment join its vast old song.

Mickey never came and greeted
Money was needed everywhere
The true artists were in short supply
In the shops to my eight year old and even I
The silent urge was: Buy! Buy! ! Buy! ! ! .

I will miss the joy of swirling tea cups
The terror of speedy space in a strobe light mountain
Friendly cho cho transport around this teeny town
And memories of the ancient: 'It's a Small World After All.'

But for all the magnetism of marketing hype
There's something missing that seemed once to be there
And forty six years later scratch my head and wonder
Could it simply be this time I had to pay the fare?
I HAD TO PAY the fare.

Bill Grace

Dividing Words

Bob Kimball's gift came as no small piece of education
When he spoke of 'the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, '
I would have thought him mad if not a Harvard man
And Paul Tillich's literary executor to boot.
He was far too good to me in many ways to ever easily dismiss.
The very same experience through Maslow's insight
I knew as 'peak experience.'
Great was the shock to learn
How much is the power
Of vocabulary to divide.

Bill Grace

Divine Mind

If there is a divine mind
It does not work like human minds
This ever expanding thing beyond the stars
Through sacrifice we must at least suspect it moves
How else can we understand His cross - a scandalous beauty?
My experience and thought beyond political currents -
Very little truly moves without sacrifice.

Bill Grace

Dog Nose

Dog knows by nose
he does not know the word
'epistemology'
nor does he care
to know,
his nose the circumference
of his understanding -
no secret ghosts:
death
poverty
failed loves
fear,
just a nose
through which he understands the world
and you
and me.

Bill Grace

Double Barrel

In the privacy of the polling booth
My wife sits a full room away and waits
Hers is a greater than usual patience.

The names of two great odysseys paralyze me
More than whatever their politics may be
It is the dual barrels of their lives
That make me freeze,
Become incapable of decision.

The flashing red light
Tells me I must decide
The weeks of watching them will not abide
I pull the trigger the safety I must release
No, finally I am on the other side
And fire the ballot that only God will ever know.
Daughter comes and retrieves me bleary from this show
This vote is done and to home it's time to go.

Bill Grace

Doug Cooper And The Morning Mensch

In the corner of the donut shop I remember him
Philadelphia's gem merchant extraordinaire
Whose advertising visage haunted national magazines
Scion of separate fortune
Despite our shared loved for parts of Shakespeare
He had so much and I so little,
I feared him without cause.
He would approve my morning corner
Watching the mensch in woodland, purple and mail uniform blue
In heaven
Not even needing the mention of his name.

Bill Grace

Drinking Water

Water is blah
My doctor says aha
You drink the stuff
And this is good.

Bill Grace

Dry Poet

I'm dry
You sigh
We both cry.
Dry Poet
I'm dry
You sigh
We both cry.

Bill Grace

Each Life Is In Its Little Capsule

Each life is in its little capsule.
The street kid knows little more than street.
Most merchants understand their lives as their wares.
Teacher - classroom. Poet - poem.
Christ sees it all and weeps.

Bill Grace

Early Morning Coffee

Early morning coffee with your doctor is nice
But anal retentiveness in introspection may discover a vice
For if the good doctor's flight is true
Personal time management proclivities you may well rue.

Bill Grace

Early Morning Sale!

The parade of customers into the store,
6: 00 AM start - requiring a 5: 00 AM position
Tell of economics 101 not changing much
Unlimited wants and limited means
A truth no politician can safely declare.

Bill Grace

Easter Approaching In 2015 A.D.

My dear and deep friend Bob
challenged me to write a poem
I accept the challenge
and write from a land
of vulgar T-shirts
and fast streaming wealth.

I sit quietly on the curb
pondering Jesus
into risen Christ
like a moth to flame
I write
awaiting my resurrection.

Bill Grace

Eat Dessert First

Eat dessert first

life is indeed

uncertain.

Who ever could guess

that the man

who made me a colonel,

once out of power

would never return

to let me say thank you.

Bill Grace

Edgings

Edgings, def: a plural noun, often a blank verse piece of poetry whose doggerel is on the edge of classic blank verse offerings.

Bill Grace

Education As An Antidote To Mud

The Army taught me a great lesson
The way to stay out of the mud
Is to go to school.
This formula is as simple as it is true
Alexander Solzhenitsyn has validated it too
And even General Patton has granted us the lesson
That the best use for mud is for education.

Bill Grace

Education's Tandem Rig

A great teacher is kinetic art
(as surely as any gal who ever played the pole.)
They move and think and teach
are invested in a way the hirelings are not.
They help us to be true
When navigation may be through
They are invested in values that last.
Charlie Rose frequently forgets it is not just the teacher.
Does the student want to learn?
It takes two horses to pull a tandem rig and
Keep democracy pointed towards true north.

Bill Grace

Eight Years Of Silence

Jim Dixon concluded after eight years of monastic silence
That he was not so nice
I love this priest who could preach on Betty Boop
And try to help his flock to see his struggle with a darkness
That is inside us all.

Bill Grace

Elizabeth Taylor Remembered

I know her only from afar
Her breathing not quite stilled upon the big screen as Cleopatra's corpse
Her incomparable performance with Burton in "Virginia Wolf"
Drawing on the power of a strange darkness that could only come
from the other side of the camera
I like much about this woman I have read
Suspect only in death she is at peace.

Bill Grace

Emily Dickinson's Proof

The poet's job is to write,
publication or even fame is incidental,
Emily Dickinson proves this.
Part of the poet's job is to write some truth
Emily's works prove this
the burden is with the reader.

Bill Grace

Employment Interview Secret

In the years of desperation
I was told once
there is a secret code
that mandates you never wear
anything but Oxford
to a job interview.
I wonder how much talent was lost
because it was a secret?

Bill Grace

End Of Day

When nothing new is found
I fear the end of time
Failure to sense something sublime
This thing I can not name
That's held me all the same
Through wars and waters ravenous
Gratitude even when my pen runs dry.

Bill Grace

End Times

Perhaps these are the end times
The end of a child's life
The end of a way of strife
The end of a marriage
The end of a business
The end of a beloved pet or horse or cow
The end of an age of national influence
The end of life,
But unless we trip the nuclear trip wire
Our days will continue
Holland McSwain taught me this great truth
Which Sandy Nieman ratified with her wisdom
The end of a capsule is only
The end of the capsule in which we have traveled
in which we have been shielded from the elements.
This does not make it sacred
This does not make it holy
Change and not the end
Is the true issue in the 'End Times.'

Bill Grace

End Times II

Perhaps these are the end times:

The end of a child's life

The end of a marriage

The end of a parent's life

The end of a business

The end of a beloved pet or horse or other

The end of an age of national influence

The end of life

But unless we trip the nuclear trip wire

Our days will continue

Holland McSwain taught me this great truth

Sandy Nieman ratified it with her wisdom

The end of a capsule is only

The end of a capsule in which we have traveled

In which we have been shielded or not shielded from the elements

This does not make it sacred

This does not make it holy

This does not make it the End Times.

Bill Grace

Engineer And Merchant

The engineers and merchants look the same
Priests of our consumer ways
But my heart is with the engineers
Who will not bend to make a buck
Who do not worship the bottom line
Who fit product to need and never let a sale
Come between their soul and another.

Bill Grace

Engineering

The Golden Gate Bridge
Moscow subway
Autobahn and New York Thruway
A Wendy's coffee cup
Good engineering
Always appreciated
Regardless where found.

Bill Grace

Entitlement

Dog knows the rules
After the early morning walk
There is to be a biscuit
It is not a reward
It is an entitlement.

Bill Grace

Epiphany

Epiphanies are never planned
Soft evening light upon a yellow wall
Child and children vaulting in the mall
Untucked T shirts that say it all
I hate to break her play
For epiphanies are never planned
And have their beauty once you see.

Bill Grace

Errant Lines

Listening
in bed,
with wife beside me,
to the strange whistle
of the air conditioner -
I write.

It does not matter
that she is recovering
from cancer surgery.

It does not matter
the cat approves
the speed
of her repairing body.

It does not matter
even
that daughter joins
us in bed and jostles
the paper upon which
I write.

These are errant lines
written
but
not even for a reader.

Bill Grace

Ersatz Rain

NOAA declares a 50% probability
of rain this evening.

Outside I walk my dog -
a pleasant balmy evening -
the drop is felt on right arm
face upward, nothing else is felt.

Dog walk continues
dog stops to pee
another drop is felt
face towards sky
nothing is felt
dog hesitates,
deciding to go across street
a drop is felt -
sidewalk is checked -
no rain.

We proceed a football field's length
rain is felt -
rain is not seen -
ersatz rain
with a 50% probability
of real.

Bill Grace

Evening

It is the quiet times we cherish
When sunlight fails in brightness
And birds celebrate their evening songs
And wife goes to market
And even the dog almost knows he must be still.

It is the quiet time I cherish with hoot of a distant owl
And comfort from scripture of Mother's best tradition.

It is the quiet time I cherish
Enough to feel an air caress
Enough to close these lines in peace
It is the evening times we cherish.

Bill Grace

Evening Before Test

Testing evening is the night before the tests
When daughter goes to bed before the early hour
And I reflect on old percentile scores
That couldn't be maintained through out my space
Realizing how foolish to have made of my days a race.

Bill Grace

Ever The Effort

It is those struggles I find so interesting
The house, the neighbors, the wife, the child - not even children
Even the dog presents a challenge
The effort to love that fails
Even the effort.

Bill Grace

Every Poet Needs A Roof

When Robert Frost's home was purchased
It made me think that every poet needs a house
Poetry is not well written under bridges
The sacrifice of Rupert Brooke and others considered
So, every poet needs a roof
The beauty being very few of us will worship it.

Bill Grace

Evolution

When I was eight
saying the rosary
to Wagner
in the living room
the word was God.

By undergraduate years,
thanks to inspired professors,
divinity
was discovered.

As my circle
draws towards close
I find reverence
in a Hindu phrase:
"That which is unstained
by words."
with a little help
by pictures
from the Hubble telescope
and other things
now that Wagner's gone.

Bill Grace

Experience - A Poem Dedicated To My Father

Dad told me during World War Two
Of an incident he personally knew
Where air ship, personnel and crew
Were saved by their pilot's experience.

The engine quit on take off
The plane had only two
The pilot dipped the failed wing
And turned to field to safely land.

Dad cared for planes in that great war
He is no longer with us in his burly form
But he would celebrate that pilot
Who cared for 150 and even more
Had the wisdom to put his aircraft in the drink
In hope it would not untimely sink
Enabled the care and rescue that so many gave
Goodness upon our planet that outlasts the grave.

Bill Grace

Face Returned From War

My General's face
I know it well
Though not as well as wife or child
And do not presume upon small acts of service
Rendered as salute.

Back from war
No change in soul for sure
By miracle of grace
But a purple line of toil upon his face
Makes me celebrate he's with us
And assure that soul its need for rest.

Bill Grace

Faces Of Hitler's Children

Much of the city's elite turned out
I was an honored peasant guest
From chamber music in the foyer
To flanking giant screens
It was a first class affair.

We honored Hitler's children
- but Hitler had no children -
Yes - he did
The ones he killed
The ones not perfect enough
For Aryan perfection
His numbers far exceed
That of our best mass murderers.

The talk was of work,
Most company names
I recognized.
In groups of red, yellow and blue
They were nicely martialled
To have their moment on the stage
To let them know
How much we loved them
How much we honored:
Their work □
Their struggle
Their silent contribution
These children - adults -
Of the Fuhrer's
Death wish
On a sea
Where waves of thanks
Issued from their lips
These children of another world's fuhrer.

Bill Grace

Fact And Fantasy

athered at lunch with friends and film

The film is the fifth in a series celebrating mass rocketry violence

The drinks are pleasant the company pleasant

The movie ends

I return to healing from cat wounds

Friend one returns to his computer repair business

Friend two returns to his utility pension

Fact and fiction nicely paired

On a beautiful fall day.

Bill Grace

False Center Of The Universe

My right to buy is guaranteed
by all the land's great names
it is a thing that grants,
a modicum of fame.
Community is a joke
or even worse a sham -
this is a common situation
across our whole wide land.

Church, lodge or legion will attempt
to dent this stately wall
but the right to be foremost
is a right guaranteed to all.

Only in silence
scripture
music
can there be a thrall
release from some unnamed demand
to be king or queen of all.

Bill Grace

False Pockets

I grew up
before the age of false economy
before fashion's invention
of the false pocket.

I have learned to check.

What may look like a pocket
may be only that
a look,
but you have to look
to check
to know,
if what looks like a pocket
is a pocket.

Bill Grace

Family Emergency Against The Panikhida Service

Wife with mother in a peril of potential death
Girth of a continent away
Daughter kicks against sleep and me with her all
House floating the great chair is at last a pseudo prize.
And the melodies of church chant from her native land
It soothes though I can not understand a word
It soothes as it is her native tongue
Nine and fifty nine year old in meeting
Brings me to a space I can not name.
Brings us to a peace in prelude
To sleep as a forgiving drug.

Bill Grace

Fan Letter

This quiet poet would have you know
Charley Rose I love your show
And the many who glitter around your table's womb like black
Your atmospheric innovation that helps draw them out
And contain the potential for the panic of attack.

But if my understanding through other media is true
There is at least one guest who may be lime light through
It occurs to me of your vastly distinguished guests
All the acting may not all be going on, on the other channels.

Bill Grace

Fast Genuflection To Rilke

If my teachers are correct
Shakespeare cared most about his poetry
We know this from his efforts to preserve it
The plays were a cast away effort to earn a buck.
The poet's gift is frequently lost
The form too intense
The writer's background hostage to the reader
So that the dot and dash of words do not communicate
Do not tell, do not allow us to feel
But poets,
With a fast genuflection
To Rilke's insight,
Have no choice but to write
What it is they write.

Bill Grace

Fat Jack '72

Bucks for a burger as a tip
He told me of his poetry and street days
That aluminum rims are nice but slice
under the duress of blowing tires
He talked - I listened and learned
Another significant lesson
From a fellow failed tire upon the planet.

Bill Grace

Fat Phobic

Two simple things, sugar soda and beer
Guarantee for me
The reality of accelerating pounds
Which carries other things
I fear far more.

Bill Grace

Faucets That Work Well

My English teachers might not approve this thought
But if I understand the confessional genre of Sharon Olds correctly -
she might.

It is not just our childhood's that we survive or transcend or by
which we are destroyed.

The present is not a small thing.

An automatic faucet that works -
truly works well - is not a small thing.

All of these work in the corporate suite
when the sale is made.

It is later that the true test will come
long after the commission has been paid.

A thing that works well is a grand thing.

I appreciate the engineers who make life work smoothly,
for a few this will be the only thank you they ever receive.

Bill Grace

Fdr Talks

Failed consultation with a King
Helping Israel to birth.
Fireside chats for a nation.
Hitler, Jesus and Isaiha
Never underestimate the power of talk.

Bill Grace

Feeding Outside Cat

In feeding the outside cat
I have noticed that
The preferred food has higher fat
A universal preference
Whether on two feet or four.

Bill Grace

Fifty Year Professor – Rose Bachim-Alent - A Celebration Of Her Life

The paying of debts

is not always an onerous task

sometimes love's circle takes

a lifetime to complete.

She taught us to love literature

much more than a stopping place

on the road to somewhere else -

the others are forgiven.

The first experience of noetic power

(if Victor Frankl's insight is correctly interpreted by Robert Leslie)

she took us to Europe one class room hour

with glazed eyes untouched by drugs

and in French, German, Spanish

made real the place in English.

□

There were honors

a Cross from Germany's President

from the French an induction; ' Ordre des Arts des Lettres'

perhaps there were others

newsletters are not always read.

Larger than life

she never wore the same outfit twice

in death

an only regret is a wish

to have said "thank you"

long before these lines.

Bill Grace

Fighting With Wife

In fighting with wife
I've noticed the strife
Simply kicks everything else to hell.

Bill Grace

Fill In The Blank Prayer

Oh Lord, God of the Universe
I give you thanks for -- --.

Bill Grace

Fire Ant

Three skin strikes upon a red welt -
A little greater than a fish belly white pin head -
An accident in nothing more adventurous than a pristine pool
Tell of this fire ant's excellence
At being a fire ant and
Capacity for harm
That even being a-float
In what was for this creature a vast sea
Did not keep him from capacity for hurt
And a certain destiny
That returned his fire to God
Never to sting again.

Bill Grace

Fire That Does Not Warm

Let the public hold their din
No acceleration of bin Laden's sin
We have Mussolini over a tar pit
For all who will work to see
Osama's hole in the head
Will not set us free
From hatred's fires that do not warm.

Bill Grace

Firecrackers And Deer

Have you ever read
a more ridiculous recipe
for a combination
of two words?

Bill Grace

Fireflies At "Der Stall";

Fredericksburg
far from tourist crowds
a touch of old Germany
fireflies in the night
deer
a peacock calls in day
a life time of pieces
ancestor history
decorates the walls,
oasis
of a different world
not even TV
is allowed to invade.

Bill Grace

First Confession

During the roving sinner party
with food and gifts and the warm fireplace
the special operations veteran took me aside
took me to a room lined with fountain pens
confession and testimony
a story of fields of bones - die leiden menscheit
of deaths beyond its many levels
ache in a voice pride in the history of a father's greatness
with the close listening
something twisted deep inside
moist eyes betrayed what lips would never utter
a moment of rare regret
that I could not raise my arm in absolution
speak words of repatriation and reconciliation.

At home after the party
Robinson Jeffers was read
(Hurt Hawks, Shine Perishing Republic)
as penance for a fallen altar boy
who just heard his first confession
with out faculties.

Bill Grace

First Confession II

During the roving sinner party
with food and gifts and the warm fireplace
the special operations veteran took me aside
took me to a room lined with fountain pens
confession and testimony
a story of fields of bones - die leiden menscheit
of deaths beyond its many levels
ache in a voice pride in the history of a father's greatness
with the close listening
something twisted deep inside
moist eyes betrayed what lips would never utter
a moment of rare regret
that I could not raise my arm in absolution
speak words of repatriation and reconciliation.

At home after the party
Robinson Jeffers was read
(Hurt Hawks, Shine Perishing Republic)
as penance for a fallen altar boy
who just heard his first confession
with out faculties.

Bill Grace

First Day Of School - 2010

The storms of summer end with breaking light
This tells nothing of my daughter's fright
Of junior high school days that will flow
One upon another for her to know
The building of another year
Towards some destiny beyond a father's fears.

Bill Grace

First Load Of The Day - Confessions Of A House Hubby

Before the phone's pull to reality
At about seven hours of sleep
The brain begins to function with out pills
And having tasted something of the wisdom of the world
Decline to quickly rise and face it.

Within the morning stupor between first energy and sleep
An intensity of concentration
I plan the first load of laundry
Like a field marshall moving divisions
Wondering how long they will hold or advance
Against the onslaught of this thing called dirt.

Bill Grace

First Loan

'First loan interest free'
Shun this money
As you would the siren song
Of drugs with out prescription
One taste of easy dollars
And they have you forever.

Bill Grace

First Route Run

Before sunrise - walking dog
The glow of the GPS and the map book
The hazard blinker on
Tell me he is lost
Or at the very least off his game.

The cute red car is not too far
From one I owned in youth.
The newspaper waits in my driveway.
He has missed the neighbor's delivery.
The dark of a first route run
Does not just belong to newsboys.

Bill Grace

First Train To Jordan

I love the quiet moment with holy writ
when words from different time and place
help me to better see my place
with eyes far greater than my own
life for a moment in the divine zone.

I love the sacrificial brightness of my land
strong enough to stop that dark Fascist band
and blunt the terrors of Stalin's expanding reign
restoring to world humanity its chance for decency again.

I love the men of forgotten honor
who gave the foundations of our day
who never allowed a lie to stay
long enough beside them to stain
the storied hour that history's truth can wondrously play.

I love cloudless moonlight upon the quay
that for beauty's power is as great a day.

I love the beauty of the dance that reveals the latent power of human form.

I love the smiles of the old
bespeaking great truths not easily told.

I love the smiles of the young
bespeaking deep hope in life that lives within.

I love the memory of maiden's bright
and apologize to them for my great fright
not knowing the depth of my Puritan blood
and capacity for Pharasaic slight.

I love the startle of my daughter's
morning full fairwell kiss
and all her other surprises that I will miss
when cradled in the earth
the test will come if love is ever broken.

I love these things and many more
come visit here and touch the growing store
for God has granted fire that may yet endure
and will open here still further doors
of what just one soul alone can love.

Bill Grace

First Water

As we are dust
The first water of the day is not necessarily the best
Yet critical to all that will come
An anchor to help us against wind
That would blow us where it would.

Bill Grace

Five Feel Good Memories Of A Once Upon A Time Pastor

1. Counseling with the camp terror on a tent step.
2. Helping 'Duffy' die.
3. Making Louis Canales get up again on the right side of the bed after getting up on the wrong side of the bed.
4. 'Heat of the Day Award' in Saudi Arabia.
5. Seeing hearts change during Desert Storm.

Bill Grace

Five Lines On Growling Puppies

The puppy protests he is wrapped around a tree
Constraint of leash the reason he is not free
But growl he will and carry on with me
As he only understands it is I who move
While the power of the leash he does not see.

Bill Grace

Five Wars Personalized

World War II - a father's ancient wound observed

Viet Nam - unraveling a Gordian knot, Dave Fox killed

Gulf War I - Hitler's little clone pushed back

Gulf War II - Strike at ghost of Osama bin Laden

Afghanistan - Wrestling with the Bin Boys on an uphill mat.

Bill Grace

Five Wars With Parallels To Baseball

World War II - Dad's grief observed - Pop up caught at home plate

Vietnam - Gordian Knot conundrum - Game rained out

Gulf War I - Stopping Hitler's clone - Base hit to center field

Gulf War II - Twin Tower revenge - Bases loaded

Afghanistan - Wrestling with Bin Laden's boys - All bases in to home

Bill Grace

Five Words To Achievers

Day by day -
- Is ok.

Bill Grace

Flag Pole In Westhoff Texas

The pole stands stark in the cemetery
The public driving by will not see it
I am not driving - I am driven - given the freedom to see
On the road cemeteries are a common sight
But a solitary pole over a private grave
Is starkness to be remembered.

Bill Grace

Flood

The cat turds turned to soup
Floors more slippery than ice
Clothes required washing twice
Even pennies were not secure
The flood came and did its thing
Never underestimate the power released
Of a malfunctioning washing machine.

Bill Grace

Florescence And The Angel

The tree is up
The work is done
I wish I could say
It all was fun.

Beautiful toys on generous display
Drink with a friend of comrade structure
Winter solstice of the pagan year.

STOP! STOP! STOP! STOP! STOP!
As Jesus came and trod upon earth's sod
Our hope that he was truly God
Then all this abounding kitch is not cool
We need to return to school
To learn lessons of an even more quiet sort.

Listen to the clock strike its hour
Pray for all its victims
This sheen of visiting pagan peace
Takes us from the child's much deeper truth.

Bill Grace

Foggy Morning

Sometimes the morning start is slow
You can not find your glasses
And wear frames so ugly
Only the military could issue them,
Or some agency purporting to make us equal.
On this day you are glad
For the extra cautions of your life
The care at the view blocked intersection
The parade of potential accidents passing by
When things are normally clear and you skim through
Realizing what could have been the cost
If you had not stopped and meant it
On a foggy morning where you could
See a mile clearly and still miss it.

Bill Grace

Fondly Remembering Bea - A Series Dedicated To Former Girlfriends And Near Girlfriends And Trying To Tell The Truth About It All

She was Ivy - I was State
This should have told us we would never mate
Her father an exec and my Dad too
But his was a big name company and mine was a small name assist
His was for profit my Dad's was not
I am quite sure to boot I was a snot.
So different were our worlds
We could not get through dinner without fighting.
The sadness is at sex we were great!
This sex thing being no small estate
It held us together for six months at least
Assisted with the glue of a major move for her
All this time lost looking for the one who could have been truly right
Because precocious sexual success
Had held us as prisoners in the tower of its might.
After the break up we could barely nod
At the single's group where we had first met.

Bill Grace

Food Concerns With Joan Of Arc

I am off camera

She is a prisoner – stewing

That a device for her feeding

Is not being properly administered

It is two feet wide by a yard long

Open at its rectangular end

Of seemingly tubular like iron construction

I do not truly understand the rant

A dream

The only thing that beats the internet in defeating time and space.

Bill Grace

For Philip Levine

When Bob called
and told me you were gone
I started reading
you
gritty poet
and at number four
my cankered soul
was touched
and I knew at that moment
that you were great
as well as gone.

Bill Grace

Formula For Making Rank

Our mentor gave us this formula for making rank

'Work your boss's priorities...'

More than a little pagan given Gospel sensitivities

Of a group of ordained ministers -

But not a bad formula for survival -

In a world where Christmas was located over the winter solstice.

Bill Grace

Formula For Making Rank - Rewrite

Our mentor gave us this formula for making rank

'Work your boss's priorities...'

More than a little pagan given Gospel sensitivities

Of a group of ordained ministers - but not a bad formula for survival -

In a world where Christmas was located over the winter solstice.

Bill Grace

Four Bibles

Four Bibles have been given over time
Each one was gift
Though better at listening than in my youth
At age I wonder
If God is again, trying to tell me something.

Bill Grace

Four Lines Looking For A Title

Perhaps if I had read 'The Scarlet Letter'
Instead of Bacon's Essays
My passion in high school would have been less
To parade around with a big 'A' on my chest.

Bill Grace

Four Slender Books Of Poetry

Leo Rockas informed my undergraduate mind
"The Reader's Digest" was the antithesis
Of what I had to learn to strive for in his class,
The noble professor was of course correct.
Mother raised me on one of Louis Untermeyer's tomes
'War and Peace' – also present – was never cracked.
Perhaps in these ancient memories a cause
Why today four slender books of poetry are by my side
And poetry not prose is the attempt
To leave a parting gift.

Bill Grace

Francis Bacon's Four Idols

Tribe, cave, market place and theatre

He asks we consider them to make an honest call

To generate the probability of a reduced fall

Of intellect and character's potential for integrity.

Bill Grace

Free Food - A Poem Dedicated To The Community Of Workers Who Make 'Daily Bread' A Reality

Free food I know it is a lie.
I can not kill that sign even though I want to.
Those who come for help will not be charged -
this much is true,
but the food is not free.
The driver and the truck
who bring it to the church,
they are not free.
The warehouse is not free.
The producers and distributors
who give it to us know
it is not free.
The church is not free.
Even Christ's great love
was not free.
Yes, the sign says: 'Free Food.'
It is clever marketing
probably even necessary
but I know it is not true.
There is at least two millenniums of cost.

Bill Grace

Friends Leaving

Friends leaving a simple ache
You wish them well
Hope there's no mistake
But despite the necessary action
You know a piece of yourself
Leaves with them even before they're gone.

Bill Grace

From A Fast Food Line

The voice over the intercom at the end of the fast food line

Goes into her hi light litany of:

"Would you like to try a today? "

The voice melodious, enthusiastic, confident, energetic

I reply with almost no inflection:

"No. Two burgers off the value menu and a glass of water - please."

Her voice drops two octives and repeats the order.

Napoleon at Waterloo.

Youth learning a limit to its powers.

Bill Grace

Front Page

On the front page of the newspaper
the beautiful woman wipes her tear
The copy beneath details a decade ago loss.
In Texas a bonfire that killed twelve is a big deal.
I wonder if our understanding of our connectedness will ever grow
To the point where any twelve deaths
Will merit a front page anniversary?

Bill Grace

Fter Hacksaw Ridge (The Film)

The next day
after seeing the cinematic genius
of Mel Gibson
I realized again
how horrible it must have been
for those who truly knew war.

My father was blessed by education
the Army had better uses for him
than carrying a rifle in the Pacific.
Many were not so fortunate.

Time will heal this piece of education
it has not been twenty four hours
and hands are shaking far less.
Yet what of those who truly carried the burden?

I can only offer a humble 'thank you.'
Make sure my Congressman knows my vote
goes to a hearty support of the VA.

Bill Grace

Gandhi

This man unknown to my hand,
'seditious... fakir' to Churchill, haunts me.
Owning nothing he seems to own my soul,
Not even from the solemnity of grave but a flowing river
Directs my political soul
In directions so unpolitical as to bewilder.

I am not alone.
Warner Sallman depicts him in his head of Christ
That emerges only as you draw near.
A strange thing to be haunted by so formless a ghost.

Bill Grace

Garfield's Ghost

Garfield's poster that reads:

"The guy with the most toys at the end wins"

Is theology not humor

Many if not most will agree

But I think I hear a far distant whisper from one

About camels, and needle eyes and the entitled rich

Who finds a very different cosmic view

About death and the thrill of collecting.

Bill Grace

Genghis Khan Plants A Tree

We call him Genghis Khan
In our private conversations
This man grotesque enough
To merit a police report
For conduct unbecoming a former Marine
Viet Nam having left more than physical scars.

He tried to plant a tree
Which wind wrecked
Or some other act of God I can't remember.
It seeming strange to me
To give God credit for this tragedy.

Wife and probably Dog don't like him.
A truck being a formidable and ugly weapon
Yet he has spoken nicely enough to me.
Still I wish his tree had lived
I suspect he has seen enough of death
That dark side of him requires no further feeding.

Bill Grace

Genuflection To Spinoza

The greatest question remains
Beyond the circumstances of our lives that form us
Is there a TRUTH
That gently smiles at, weeps with, mocks at, or even more...
Frail human understanding?
Or is the question itself
Only my desperate need for hope?

Bill Grace

George Marshall's Ghost

Forgive me, Sir, for raising you up from recent print
But Kennan's death was front page in Moscow
Containment was one of your grandchildren also!
I have read of Eisenhower and McArthur
Been told by generals of Patton and Bradley
And learned from rather dogged research
That you were scion to a host of lesser greats
The pundits have come to call 'Our Greatest Generation.'
Perhaps in celebration a quote is in order:
'You can do infinite good if you do not care who gets the credit.'
Like Lee the sweet fragrance of your character
Grows stronger with history's gathered fragments.

Bill Grace

Ghost Strike!

Watching the young woman,
in the restaurant where you could leave
your cell phone at your table and expect
to find it when you came back,
Her gesture in speaking to her companion
Was a movement
neither vulgar
nor improper
Only emphatic.
It was not new nor of the heart.
My daughter of fifteen
has moved to this choreography.
The switch
In the darkness
Of my mind
Goes on!
Aha -
Barbie has struck again!

Bill Grace

Gift Of Pen

For one who has always liked to write
there could not have been a finer gift
than the pen
that married mind to page
helped give the world
what little
I have come to clearly see
the fun part being
the man who gave this gift
has a store front filled with more.

Bill Grace

Goal And Gain

Goal and gain
are not the same
the story of my life.

Bill Grace

Goals

Goals are great and give a rudder to the ship
That help us go in life from A to B
With A to B I have no quarrel
For travel often carries education.

But A to B is oft girded by hope of B to C
And C to D on on to Z
Alpha to Omega our lives simply do not go
From psyche this false hope far better that we throw.
And if rich enough in faith to substitute a question - simply ask,
'Do I enjoy the struggle of going A to B? '
Leaving C to the worry of another.

Bill Grace

God And The Combat Simulation Range

The on the border of asphixiation event was a training incident
The statistics missed
That came from not understanding the proper technique
For the combat simulation crawl which in my day was
Vastly more of a push with the legs
Than a lift of outstretched arms
In modified push up style.

The glow of the machine gun tracers
Were close enough to light the night's sand
You could not stand up to risk a bullet in the head -
Or even worse - the attention of a drill sergeant,
So you craawled forward in perfect harmony with others
Which was the intention of the exercise.

Asphixiation is not a pleasant thing
The Romans knew how to to use it well
For a thing today we call political terror
So in my night of greatest crisis when a cross came so near
I prayed with the greatest intensity of my life to date:
'Dear God help me! ' and I felt a presence
And in this God did.

There is a sequel to this old soldier's story
Of being a chaplain's assistant many years later
Being told by a patient in the great cancer hospital
'I don't need your product.'
The product being: God or spirit or religion or divinity
or some other poor derivative of what I felt that night.
I am sure this man also prayed once
I am also sure he did not feel a presence
Of an incident the statistics missed.

Bill Grace

God Gave A Better Course

There is some enormous grief within me
That waits to grieve its day
Why else would some old poet's bio
Touch me with a hint of tear.

There was little room for poetry in youth
Mrs. Broadwell Shrugged and said: "It's all right."
When brought words of an observed eagle's flight.
It put me off a year or two
Her confirming shrug of life's indifference
But snow has beauty and it inspired anew,
What became words of poetry in national print
That slowly began to thaw
The curse that alcohol can pass along.

A President was what they wanted
And a poet was what they got,
Not that any of us knew this in the intervening years.
From what I've seen of politics
God gave a better course than they could see
And besides, I have always liked to eat
And there may even be an eternity.

Bill Grace

God Strikes A Match

God strikes a match

The airlines of a continent wimper and stall
3,000,000 are touched in the blink of His eye
The inconsequential God who no one knows.

My thanks to Keith Jenkins for a wonderful breakfast where he sparked the phrase: 'God strikes a match'

Bill Grace

God's Sense Of Humor

God has a sense of humor and
If you have time I have a tale.

In military basic training land
The youngsters - not always young -
Always come to chapel..
It is the only place where they are free
Loosed temporarily from the fetters of their captivity.
Basic is a place of pressure and of pain
Access to the military a goal to be gained.
The process lasts about twelve weeks
Twelve being the number chosen by our greatest teacher.

One Christmas eve with help from wife
Her intent being to help ease my preaching strife
A great sermon was spoken to the uniformed throng
Their attentiveness told me absolutely nothing was wrong.
A great sermon preached to a sea of faces
A little less pain in one of God's strange places.

But the best was yet to be
For God's sense of humor held a gift for me
That in that night of greatest pastoral power
A goal of rich adolescent vision had come to flower.

Bill Grace

Good Kitty Day

No burr in her fur
Good kitty day.

Bill Grace

Good Paper

If it is true Harvard will welcome my papers
I repent of any more poems being written upon cheap paper
Suspect Mother must be rejoicing that at last I am in
Despite the small matter of death's admission
This venerable institution which she said she would scrub floors
To see me through, which I suspect was a lie
That a lot of love and luck and therapy has helped me see
Berkeley's environment not being too shabby a place
For one with a great hunger to learn
Presbyterian mother and Catholic father not understanding the achievement
Until he was dead and she living with the retired of Cornell
At last she understood Berkeley was Harvard with better sun.

Bill Grace

Goodness

Of all the goodness that has touched my days
Very little of its form has stayed
But some trace of its residual within my soul
Defies this process of my growing old
And when my body can not push the ink you read
When my greed is eternally still
Goodness at least attempted here
Will in the madness of our sphere
Tinkle a little in the daily wind
As if its form had stayed.

Bill Grace

Goof Off Poet

I'm a goof off poet.
The world can barely understand
For it does not make too many demands.
Unlike that pretty blonde in Swarthmore so long ago
For whom so many of my energies were a show
Who was upset when I forsook insurance and shipped for Berkeley
I liked her and her great beauty held allure
But with it she would have more than settled the practical score
With this future goof off poet
Who did not know what self was true.

Bill Grace

Gopher On A Tank Field

Having gotten not too gloriously squashed on more than one occasion and very
nearly so on that which gives the spine to leisurely write
I have learned it is not wise for gophers to argue with tanks
The tanks always being the winner
But better to seek a hole and let them pass over
To observe their peculiar rage another day
Almost always guaranteeing eventual destruction.

Bill Grace

Grace

Grace

More than a last name

Summary of a life history

(Even if you are not up to reading theology talk)

Not a matter of cheap allegiance

These confessions of a half point colonel.

Bill Grace

Grace Line Of 27 Oct 2016

Stupidity declares itself,
evil almost always
runs silent and deep

Bill Grace

Grace Line Of 3 Nov 2016

I do not believe
anything honors God
as much as our transcendence
of 'stuff'
which if we are honest
claims so much
and is the true competition
in this area.

Bill Grace

Grace Lines Of 26 Oct 2016

In my youth Mr. Rumsey said to me:
What are you going to do with all of your erudition?
Fifty years later I can reply - write.

Bill Grace

Grace Note Of 27 Oct 2016

Stupidity declares itself,
evil almost always
runs silent and deep

Bill Grace

Grace Note Of 28 Oct 16

Creativity is a great impetus that we can impact some parts of our environment.
Worship - respect for all the parts that our ego assembles - is a necessary
corrective to the creative impulse

Bill Grace

Grand Opening

After the long sleep
(six months)
fingers gooey with chocolate
the community donut shop
opens.

The owner welcomes me
with free coffee
and product
text messages are sent.

I fortify my joy
with a kolache
and poetry
there are no balloons
at this grand opening.

My friend Louise
will return,
My PhD. buddy
will come for sure
with his granddaughter,
- the young Hispanic women
- with their young children
- babies
- full packed jeans
- alluring flesh
all will come.

A good day
a first day of commerce
a grand opening
a place of community
restored
without balloons
with steady traffic.

Bill Grace

Grays

Age's gray on top
Gray boards in back
The gray of unburnished statues
Gray is the color most often time takes
That year's alone do not always make.

Bill Grace

Great Calm

I will share with you a truth
After every great storm
There comes a great calm.

Bill Grace

Greed

I do not think greed a natural thing
Though it makes the heart of many sing
And the blood of almost all runs faster
At finding a good deal.

But the thing that greed tries to fill
Is - despite the object's possession - oft with us still,
For years can carry wounds
That years alone will never heal.

There is a middle way
That requites us from the bitter climb
Upholds a vision of things sublime
Poetry and prayer and friendship's deep currents
The meaning of being whole
Perhaps even the intimation of a soul.

Bill Grace

Guidance For The Electorate In A Presidential Year

I have only one formula to share
Vote for the candidate you find most humble
The temptation to hubris being beyond
The capacity of most to measure.
S/he will have much to learn in office
Not having to climb over a mountain of ego -
Will accelerate this process,
Hopefully to the benefit of all
Including our children who are so often
Forgotten in the great councils.

Bill Grace

Gulf Coast – May 3,2015

Long after I am gone
these waves will roar
upon this shore
and a deep sand beached tree
may well endure
with its intimations of Viking ship.

I will not protest
if God grants leave
close to final hours
time to spend
upon this bit of door
in my hope
that there is more.

All this despite
my fellow ants in anticipation
of bikini power
with their yellow flags flown
black turtle emblazoned
"SEA TURTLE PATROL"
upon dune buggies
that are issued.

Bill Grace

Gymnastic Competition

I approve the civility of the sport
That injures less than almost any other
Age, sex, skill, experience - all the factors
That determine who will win,
A winner's platform oft with room for seven
The beauty of their costumes and youth
An environment where all are winners
Gravity defied and even a nation blessed
By the lessons that can be learned.

Bill Grace

Haiku Revisited

Miracle observed
divine electricity
a black bird walking

Bill Grace

Hamburger Girl II

The hamburger girl smiles nicely at my gray hairs
I look forward to placing my order with her
The manager can not tolerate the chaos of success
Sweeps in and takes my order
Delivers the product and is done

NEXT!

More was acquired than an ice cream cone.
Somehow, something precious and unspoken was lost.

Bill Grace

Hamburger Girls

They are young. They are fun.
They know I like them.
'Would you like some ketchup? '
'No. I can not have it.'
The fries are hot though I am not
Yet still we love each other.

Bill Grace

Hard

The man was hard
Meeting the executioner's needle
His choice of scripture was hard
His care for his family was hard
His murder of the pleading captain was hard
An obscure nun was the only soft he ever knew

Bill Grace

Hartmann Acknowledged

The case that went to war
Has gone for child
In both an extreme of service.
But child compared to war
An impossible comparison
After both deeds are done.

Bill Grace

Harvard Memorial Chapel Wall Words

'While a bright future beckoned
they willingly gave their all
that we might learn in peace
the meaning of service to others.'

Bill Grace

Hate Mail

It was my first experience of hatred electronically conveyed
From far away but still
Some horrible wound must have been given
To prompt the fire that even wires could not cool.

I will revisit the offending poem
Continue for a while the post mortem already under way
To wound is not my pleasure, I know a better communion.
But it may come down to this,
As one who repents an arrogance towards Shelley in my youth,
It just may be that what was written
Despite hatred's fire either far or near
Was simply this one soul's truth.

Bill Grace

Heil Herr Herr!

Heil Herr!

Your picture James on the chip bag
merits a salute
for freshness is not
a small thing
even in the world of greats.

This is far better
than what history
has served:

□ Clement preaching his crusade

□ Hitler's massed legions□

□ Mao's image ten stories high

Pol Pot

let God have them,

I will take
your portrait -
and that of a hundred
thousand other chieftains of the market -
who are as welcome in eternity
as is the freshness of your chips.

Bill Grace

Hemingway's Garage Sale Poetry

Our digital age is wonderful
Last night I was learning
From Harvard University in Massachusetts
While sitting comfortably in Texas
But remember this
There will never be a sale of famous poet work
For twenty five cents or even fifty
Unless at a flea market or garage sale.

Bill Grace

Henry Nouwen's Wisdom Reduced To Three Lines

We are only a small part
but
we are still important.

Bill Grace

Here The Poets Sing Together

The net has united what civil commerce could not join -
Frost laboring twenty years for a two bill tip
No wonder there was a darkness to his soul,
For isolation was his true reward and punishment.

We who have come after have no excuse
For we too must write but have the grace
Of knowing of each others words and place
And in appreciation cheering on
The terrible isolation broken by the power of distant love.

How would Emily if she were with us now
Ever withstand the corruption of such adulation by her peers?
A safety - it seems - that only death or the greatest faith can guarantee.

Bill Grace

High School Reunion Of A Sort

Perhaps it was the approach of Mother's death
OR that I had missed the group's grand gathering for its twenty fifth
 For a hot date in Saudi Arabia
OR Donna the great object of my adolescent desires
 Though still buxom had added a matronly air
OR she had outgrown the arrogance of letter wearing sweater days
 When passing in vacant halls she would always acknowledge
 Anyone but me long before the term 'geek' was invented
But her glee over the coming of ice cream for dessert
Made me realize the vast gulf that had grown
Between my early lust and knowing
The quality of public rest rooms in Paris and in Fez.

Bill Grace

High Tech Respite

Sara Teasdale knows how to celebrate beauty:

'Blue waves whitened on a cliff, ...

And children's faces looking up

Holding wonder like a cup.'

But I am also grateful for what the web can give

Plug 'nature' into Google image

It is sun and sea that helps calm my evening upon a screen

And grants respite in ending to a treacherous day.

Bill Grace

Hole In The Heart

Life deals cards

One of the worst is the hole in the heart

If you discard a heart of hardness

You may pick up a hole in the heart

It's all in the cards.

Bill Grace

Hollywood And The Death Of The Ship's Captain

When age eight or so
If memory still serves at sunset
The World War II movie was called: "Away All Ships"
The captain at his post was killed
Waving his arms frantically at the Kamikaze
Shouting: "Get away from my ship! "
"Get away from my ship! "
In much the same spirit
In equal futility - and wonder -
Thirty years later I destroyed a career.
I wonder if Hollywood had allowed the good captain to live
If he too could not have survived
To yet achieve his finest day.

Bill Grace

Holocaust Echoes

Today I can not kill a man or woman
900 on a boat with children can be barely grasped
Six million require much stronger medications
Than I have prescribed.
Do you not know?
'The only good Indian is a dead Indian.'
Davy Crockett disagrees.
Pol Pot understands.
Joe Stalin smiles in agreement.
So where has this evil gone?
Oh, you think it is only a point.
Just all that race stuff of Hitler and the Nazis
and thirteen legions of accomplices.
How do we bend the tree from Homer to Plato?
How do we bring Nietzsche home for dinner?
A wise priest whose name is lost gives one formula:
'See Jesus in every shit head.'
A little too coarse?
How about the sign in the Amish store:
'Kindness Matters' - a little too simple?
If molecules were to see a vision and mutiny
Perhaps Albert Schweitzer's 'Reverence for Life'
Could be the manifesto?
Perhaps Mahatma Gandhi could be more like beacon than name?
Perhaps the scriptures could give us
Something of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's courage?
I can not help but wonder when Jesus is coming.

Bill Grace

Hope For Creeping Age

What if all that matters is not matter?
And what we think is death is dawn -
Dawn we do not understand and have never understood.

Something stands beyond our moment
Eternal - warm or cold - near or far
A presence unknown but knowing
Hope for creeping age in flesh.

Bill Grace

Hot Spot

How time does change so many things.
In youth a 'hot spot' was a place to go and drink
and perhaps in a moment of exuberance even dance upon the bar
Or a geography in a sex manual.
With age it is a place related
To species that are endangered.

Bill Grace

House At Night

The house at night is best
When wife and daughter rest
The strivings of the day
They seem to fade away
and leave a perception so profound
Even errant water is retrieved
There is only the fear of those who thief
Cat and dog understand it too
A house at night how different
Than the house at day.

Bill Grace

House Beautiful

She took me home for lunch and
It was like walking into
The pages of 'House Beautiful.'
Over tuna fish I confessed my surprise
Knowing she was not happy.
'Yes, Bill, but I always want more.'
If I could understand this tyrant called 'more'
Perhaps I could help heal the planet a tad
Just a little before leaving
'Enough' might even become a holy word.

Bill Grace

How Strange The Ache Of Love

How strange the ache of loss for those we love
Mother, father, brother, sister, dog or cat or horse
The form does not seem to matter
It is love's chord death snaps
That sways and sings
Even as it lays its welt upon our backs.

Bill Grace

How The World Works

Will you leave a donation on the curve? Yes.
The truck comes
The young men are hustling hard.
The coffee maker with glass pot,
The portable black and white television set,
The aerodynamic children's toy:
Are all airborne. The set first hits the pavement.
The young men will meet the goal exacted of them.
Quantitative again has triumphed over qualitative
But I will not give to them again.
It is 'Bomber ' Harris, Viet Nam, Enron
At my front door.
At sixty I can almost smell
When numbers have escaped their throne
And rule almost as a god.

Bill Grace

How To Bake A President

Start with two parents who have a sense of destiny denied
Add one child or nine as with the Kennedy's
Gently fold in years of education be it formal or informal
Remember Lincoln birthed the Gettysburg
From his Bible and Shakespeare and the Greeks
Add a dash of war hero or military service
Let it rise for five years before
Beating it down – twice
Bake in a crucible of national crisis
Voil` a! A classic Presidential legend
Able to feed an endless history.

Bill Grace

Hubris

I learned this lesson from my fathers well
To ignore the wreckage of a desk or room
As surely as a soul that should trespass against my path
That feared not even God the burden to greatness being so severe.
Yet grace granted a finer vision with the high horse dump
And days to repent this terrible passion of earlier years
The struggle with the dark hand of self
That can reach for this throat remains
Though more caring hands than I can count or even half deserve
Have helped grant the humor that in this darkness
Stays the power of its terrible force.

Bill Grace

Humility - A Poem Dedicated To John Levitow's Memory Cmh

It has occurred to me
As one who is future oriented
That his can be a bad trap for us,
The most true issue being
What is immediately before us.
Men rising and even medals being given
For nights of blood and fire beyond mind's grasp
For which a moment has proven destiny.
The call is always for humility
The moment that is always before us.

Bill Grace

Hurricane

A hurricane in Houston assassinates my sleep
Its winds howl across the air waves
They will reach me in the morning
The moon has a strange glow
The television's animations - its terrible sounds
Keep my old friend's memory close as
Pavarotti's voice plays biography on the educational channel and
I ride under my blanket supported by the great blue couch
In a 'fierce and beautiful world, '
Which is a translation of a Russian's title
I have never read.

Bill Grace

Hurricane Heroes

Where you have a legion of heroes
choose one
but celebrate more than one name
everyday sorts of folks
not looking for any glory
just trying to be
and when the Great White shark comes
the courage to bop it on the nose
because their arm or hand
is not their center,
as the one who writes these words,
but a love for day to day
without gamesmanship
"seeking nothing
imitating nothing
bespeaking an invulnerable peace"
helping others to carry a cross
we on dry ground
can only barely imagine.

Bill Grace

Hurricane Irene

While we starve for rain in Texas
Great New York will shut its subways
Even New Jersey's casinos will close
Reminded again how little
Is the power we truly have.

Bill Grace

I Am Grateful

I am grateful
For those who read me here
This tiny part of poetry's vast sphere
An honest declaration being due
I am grateful for those read me here.
Though my failures include
Not always communicating back to you
Still, I am grateful for those who read me here.

Bill Grace

I Sit Sensate

I
Sit
Sensate

Bill Grace

I Think Therefore I Blog

Not a poem
but too good a phrase
to leave behind in my
intellectual travels.

(It is stolen without permission
from the 'Jolly Blogger' at

Bill Grace

I Was Never Here

I was never here
An ego in flesh
A little more than a rock
A little less than an angel
I was never here.

Bill Grace

Ice Cream Parlor Observation

Mother and daughter out on the town
Stopping for ice cream with a school girl spirit
Dad does not come in to laugh with them
He remains with the big car with the big engine
On a dark night with heavy rain in South Texas.

Bill Grace

Idyllic Imperfect

The happy chug of the washing machine
Washing whites left overnight to soak,
Daughter's weather forecast for the day
Between bites of breakfast pastry,
Mom sent off with a kiss,
The front porch and
Night lights through out the house turned off,
The shampooed dog of yesterday at side,
POETRY.

An almost perfect departure into the day
If only the kid could have mustered
Energy for an old man hug.

Bill Grace

If Toys Were Unlimited

If toys were unlimited then Christmas could stay
A childhood joy staid every day
But another realm this vision does not tell
A kingdom called love that we seek to sell.
I know from life's few whose toys are grande
That such things are ultimately a foundation of sand
The best foundation is that of love
It was for this lesson the sweet spirit of Jesus
Came down from above.

Bill Grace

Ike Receives His Last Salute

When Eisenhower was buried
With well deserved stately pomp
Omar Bradley was in uniform
And with a palsied hand of age
Raised it in final salute of his great chieftain
Giving television an electric moment
And affirming the bond of a great lieutenant
Not even death could break.

Bill Grace

Image

Maiden by door

Sparrow to wing

Sunlight on stone

Straw goes to home

Spring!

Bill Grace

In Extremis A Lesson

With the urine and lightly shit stained carpets
From the front door we built a sort of run way to the grass
One day I screamed and struck across pointing ears
That was before the secret of cat food was discovered
From pile to pile we motivated his movement
We never should have let it go so long.
But back to the day I struck across his pointing ears,
A beast was near – I could feel it
Only it did not have four legs.

Bill Grace

In Memoriam - Zola Crandall

My most vibrant memory of her
Is with Mr. Evans - a teacher so radical -
He loved his students and took us to see
'Dr. Strangelove' before it became part of the canon.
There may have been one day when she failed to wear a bra
You can't blame a sixteen year old too much for noticing
But I am not sure about this - time plays tricks with the mind.
Most I remember she was gentle
Smart with out being prissy or proud about it
And had a laugh that if I am quiet
I can almost hear across forty five years
Of time not kept by a class reunion.

Bill Grace

In Memory Of Christopher Reeve

There is always so much happening
Driven to be seen
Driven to be in the eye of the hurricane
Driven to be driven or seemingly secure
TO STOP FOR THREE OR FOUR HOURS SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE:
To see the magic in the most common things,
To think forty years ahead for others,
To reflect on realities beyond the yes or no of politics,
To know that sacrifice is truly noble
And that there is a final test for time
A thing called love beyond capacity for action
or even comprehension.
No, we must find this time
And then turn it on itself with thanks or perish.

Bill Grace

In Place Of A Beer

Perhaps after I am dead
Someone will explore thoughts in my head
But better it would be by far
They'd reach into my living jar
Pull a this or that into the air
Find it good and declare it fair.

Bill Grace

In The Proletarian Restaurant

In the proletarian Restaurant
there is no paper on which to write
only the distant red head
whose youth more than beauty
calls to an observer.

I wonder about the fast food worker
who was here for so many years,
has been gone at least two years,
time flying ever more quickly -
it may be three or even four
that he is gone.

I wonder about the postal worker
even at fifteen yards
you could smell the salesman about him
he will never be a victim
of the bean counters.

Yes I am a fool,
would be starving
under the standard formulas,
had Ruth not rescued me
on her death bed.
All of this in the restaurant
where I saw 911 unfold
and trembled for our civil liberties,
while in its parking lot
the man with the enormous pickup truck
has "IRON CROSS"
cut deep through the front fender.

Bill Grace

In The Proletarian Restaurant II

In the proletarian Restaurant
there is no paper on which to write
only the distant red head
whose youth more than beauty
calls to an observer.

I wonder about the fast food worker
who was here for so many years,
has been gone at least two years,
time flying ever more quickly -
it may be three or even four
that he is gone.

I wonder about the postal worker
even at fifteen yards
you could smell the salesman about him
he will never be a victim
of the bean counters.

Yes I am a fool,
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under the standard formulas,
had Ruth not rescued me
on her death bed.
All of this in the restaurant
where I saw 911 unfold
and trembled for our civil liberties,
while in its parking lot
the man with the enormous pickup truck
has "IRON CROSS"
cut deep through the front fender.

Bill Grace

Incomplete Poem Tentatively Titled - Thermals

The great bird does not think about thermals
The enormous wing span gliding through the sky
The updraft is known and trusted
There is no basis for speculation
No fear of failure for that which is so close - unexamined.

For those of us who have learned to fear
It is not the same.
The great updrafts of our lives
Almost always in the form of invitation.

Bill Grace

Infatuation Replay

The chance meeting
in the pub
not necessarily a perfect setting
to find a deep love.

Desirable she was:

- -her hair
- -her figure
- -her work
- -even her age,
- -mature enough to know
- -what was not coming
- -with the greater years.

No surprise
when she did not tell me
of her son.

There is no communication back,
it hurts as many have hurt before
-while I sit with wife
-enjoy a fire log's burning
and experience the quiet hurt
that must be akin to the desperation
of which Thoreau wrote.

Bill Grace

Inscriptions

Upstairs the Bible Mom gave me
Over twenty years to find the inscription to give an errant son
Downstairs of smaller size the same Moroccan leather
Never to be inscribed gift of a good Baptist
Who could not understand that Unitarians too were questing for truth.
Both honored and treasured books
The Baptist's inscription being written on a heart.

Bill Grace

Inside Joke For Texans Of Mexican And American Indian Descent

Bumper sticker reading: 'My family was here before 1848.'

Bill Grace

Insight From Jacques Ellul

In fourth grade Grandma Grace gave me
What theologian Ellul would call
The primary symbol of modern man
A watch currently succeeded by the cell phone
To keep us safe in the bondage of chronos
Till kairos can lure us to the rescue of our days.

Bill Grace

Instruction To A Future Poet #1

Always carry paper – pen – pencil
Or comfortable electronic equivalent
In the year 2013
Oxford "Stone Paper" is recommended
The purpose is
To be able to respond to inspiration,
You do not know
Where or when or how
It will come.
A paper that resists
Moisture
May be the inspiration
To capture a world

Bill Grace

Iron Men

Tito was an iron man
Sadam was one too.
Given the post partum
Fractures we have seen
It is best that we respect
Machiavelli's ancient wisdom
That is sustained,
That in matters of state
It is better a prince be feared than loved,
Despite the unofficial rose
Observed on Frederick's grave.

Bill Grace

Iron Sharpens Iron

The problem with a society
where steel sharpens iron
are the sparks
for those not wearing
safety glasses.

Bill Grace

It Does Not Matter

It does not matter if I leave a comment for Sharon Olds
This poet who takes breath from me
Her greatness is secure.
She requires no adulation.
She requires no crowd.
In heaven if I am lucky, perhaps I will be allowed to sit at her table
Listen to her conversation with my betters and learn.
Always the freshman learning from my betters, even in heaven.

Bill Grace

It Is Not For Me To Know

God in flame driven chariot
Much more like Moses before the burning bush
With shoes off on holy ground
Demanding definition of
The Geat and Holy One
Failing
Knowing perhaps it is time
For me simply to go to bed.

Bill Grace

'It Takes A Village To Raise A Child'

My red neck friends disdain her

Or hold her in open contempt

But she has given us a truth in a land of cities

It takes a village to raise a child.

So who were: Daisy and Pappy Millet? Don and Esther Urquhart? Ken Gardner and Jean Thompson? Sphen and Danny Loman? Jo Strain, George VanClef and Madeline Maurie?

Who were these people and others who raised me?

(The names that are not enshrined here)

You do not have to even know all their stories

To know their truth

It takes a village or at the very least

A church of great heart to help raise a child.

Bill Grace

Jacket Rumor

If I was not conned,
by one of those who like
to see jaws tense
in reaction to their words,
Amelia Earhart
burnished her leather jacket
with sand paper
to assist her rise to fame.

There is something
in well aged
well cared for leather
that we love.
Perhaps the same cut of psyche
that will not allow
a beloved saint
to become worm meat.
Grace we give
against the corporeal
grace
trapped deep
within our minds.

So if Amelia,
from my peculiar perspective
of one who loves leather,
cheated
then her jacket
beautifully burnished
intimating age and care and wear
and wisdom
was only a PR prop
that said in effect
nothing about her.
Said nothing about her
save Jackie Cochran
may well have been
the better Aviatrix
though we will soon forget her name.

Bill Grace

Jacket Rumor II

If I was not conned,
by one of those who like
to see jaws tense
in reaction to their words,
Amelia Earhart
burnished her leather jacket
with sand paper
to assist her rise to fame.

There is something
in well aged
well cared for leather
that I love.
Perhaps the same cut of psyche
that will not allow
a beloved saint
to become worm meat.
Grace we give
against the corporeal -
grace
trapped deep
within our minds.

So if Amelia,
from my peculiar perspective
of one who loves leather,
cheated
then her jacket
beautifully burnished
intimating age and care and wear
and wisdom
was only a PR prop
that said in effect
nothing about her.
Said nothing about her
save Jackie Cochran
may well have been
the better Aviatrix
who also

we will soon forget.

Bill Grace

Jason

From the depths the two mile fast walk brings sweat

JASON

Pencil thin the sidewalk's letters

His influence now set in stone

Did he ever produce son or daughter?

Give them a tool more fine?

Will his face and voice travel through time?

Last night the car was egged

Prank predictable as a boy writing in wet cement

Fortunate for me

More easily removed than hardened rock

I too write my name

Perhaps it will outlast Jason's

If something solid can be given.

Bill Grace

Jean Paul Sartre And The Cell Phone

If Sartre told the truth to his interviewer
When he became fond of a fountain pen
He would give it away.
He did not want the pen to own him.

As one owned by many things
I salute this Nobel bard owned only by his cafe.
Wonder if leaving my cell phone exposed
Portends at least some day heading towards true freedom.

Bill Grace

John Ciardi's Ghost

There sleeps beneath our plastic roof
A frail piece of Russian soil
Enough of who I am for me to know no other.
She sleeps and I turn from diversion
To better hear celestial silence and pray
That a spirit will be with us to lay a keel
Amidst the swirl of eddies
Beseting lives smarting from life's many currents.
And with this - strange grief
that so many do not care -
About the living of straight lines
Or even engagement with the struggle
That ever keeps my heart from scorn of saints.

Bill Grace

Jo-Jo's Book Case

After morning coffee with Wayne
Talking with wife about Dewey the library cat
My eye falls on Mom's old book case
That was a gift from one Josephine Strain of G.J.R. fame
An old well made entertainment center
When nineteen inches was, if not a big deal, at least adequate
An old piece of furniture - enduring -
As the memories of two who loved me.

Bill Grace

Junk Mail

Given the junk mail that comes to me
The meat of the day I'll never see
Unless I follow this established recipe
That there is no struggle if you toss it out!

Bill Grace

Just The Money Honey

One of the things I don't know that Hollywood has captured
Is a reality that Wayne Dwyer has joked about
Not so funny for a young man of baker vocation met
Who was shaken to his core in discovering
His marriage was based on his half of the rent.

Bill Grace

Kaizen In Poetry

Poem Hunter and the others have brought here a great democracy
Some might even say a beginning to the end of therapeutic theocracy
And although poets write and write with hope of being read
We often fail and are ignored instead
It is well we remember in this dilemma
To strive for better form and clearer phrase
Continuous improvement of our craft with God given days
For though poetry counts for little in this world's weal
Perhaps by unkown alloy we help keep
The universe from becoming total steel.

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Bill Grace

Kamerad

After the wonderful but long delayed meal
After after dinner coffee and desert
After the table top conversation where hours were lost
From the depths of forty five years past
My poor performance in undergraduate German
The word emerged - Kameradin - comrade
Not from war or the severity of political maneuverings
But from peace and things profoundly shared
And it was sweet - so sweet -
That I lost track of time and fear
Time and fear which ordinarily
Almost always rule me
A scepter with out its king
Three magic hours of freedom,
Here on planet earth.

Bill Grace

Keep It Simole

Keep it simple
So the past can find you
The love you lacked the courage to love
The one who was kind
The one who told truth
The one you want to thank
The one whose feet you would kiss
In contrition and in sorrow
Keep it simple
If you want the past to find you.

Bill Grace

Keep It Simple

Keep it simple
So the past can find you
The love you lacked the courage to love
The one who was kind
The one who told truth
The one you want to thank
The one whose feet you would kiss
as contrition and in sorrow
Keep it simple
If you want the past to find you.

Bill Grace

Kitten As Killer

The outside kitten at times
Is more like a cat
Especially in this nasty business of love trophies
When bright slumped yellow refuses to play.
It is an appropriate revenge
From a God who would love us all
Who gave Jesus as a light house to predators
Towards one coming so late to a reverance for life
That my idea once of a great Spring Vacation
Was killing twenty three wood chucks.

Bill Grace

Lap Pool Nymph

An hour of continuous laps
A pool of Olympic length
Her beauty distracting from the pain
The nymph's mounds rounded by halter and thong
With an alchemy that was not chemistry
I can but barely understand we were both ensnared
And by a happy circumstance, this brunette spoke.

Bill Grace

Late Evening Reading Of Sharon Olds

After the run for ice cream
After the dinner guests have left
After the dog is walked and cat given obligatory insulin
I read her poetry,
Wonder at the power of her words
Admire her many levels
Read her words with phonetic care
A displaced poet in her class A world
Who wanted most not only to eat but to eat well.

Bill Grace

Late Evening Reflection On The Front Porch With Cat

I aimed at A and
Hit W, by God's grace, or is it Z or N?
The cat crunching her meal
As holy a sound
As the rap of some committee chair's gavel.
I can not help but wonder
At the course of a life so horribly off course
From the intended trajectory of those who launched me.

A certain gray kitty
And a thousand other contingencies
Never even vaguely seen or even sensed at launch.

If Mother were alive
Would she be pleased?
The moon shines a tarnished sliver
On my wife's truck's windshield.

Bill Grace

Left Turn On Yellow

In Texas driving
there is left turn
on blinking yellow.
It has its perils
requiring the other driver
to not cut things
too close.
As one who fills
the 'unforgiving minute'
I am grateful for the invention
given doggerel is better written
in a drive way
than waiting for a light.

Bill Grace

Lenten Meditation #1

I want people to say:

'Bill Grace was by here today.'

It is a secular attraction to prestige

That helps proof the validity

Of Dante's deadly sin of pride.

Bill Grace

Leo Rockas' Touch Three Decades Plus

I've seen enough of wealth to know
Its energy can go for show
That leaves the soul quite hollow.

Socrates gave us wise advice,
Its cost to him his earthly life,
That cared infinitely more for the integrity of the quest
Than the immortality he gained in the minds of many.

Soc says we have a compass for the strife
Inclusive of the fact we can not deify the wife
Or some lesser God as we wage the noble struggle
To know who we truly are
And then be true.

Bill Grace

Lesson

If willing to but slightly stretch,
(With luck with sunshine on your back)
Paris will teach you even without its language
That you can eat both well and cheaply,
To save your money for the museums.

Bill Grace

Lesson From Bill Moyers

Bill Moyers confirmed
That in the Gulf of Tonkin
L.B.J. raced to judgement,
Confirmed the splendid tutorial gift
Wayne Morris gave so long ago.
As with Pilate and Jesus
It is almost always wise
Not to 'rush to judgement'
If you can possibly avoid
Going over the edge of this cliff.

Bill Grace

Lesson From Robert Frost's "fire And Ice"

Robert Frost has taught me
It is best not to comment on one's poetry
For when expected apocalypse does not come
A poem well written will still run.

Bill Grace

Lieutenants

Lieutenants are the key
If we can trust Friedman's great study of Lee
And we remember McArthur and Ike,
Reported to Marshall who is forgotten,
And Marshall to Roosevelt who is remembered -
Still, in all great things lieutenants are the key.

Bill Grace

Life In An Intricate Land - Corpus Christi Beach, Texas

The man who is the husband
Of the woman in the blue halter
With the magnificent Rottweiler
Explains that the dog collar's
Inward turned spikes
Do not hurt the dog,
But keep his child from being dragged
By the animal while on walks,
Which is a humanitarian decision
All things considered.

Bill Grace

Like An Acolyte

Like the acolyte of youth
I tend the night lights of our home
With strange proclivity for nourishing their glow
That in darkness makes a statement of decisive show
Against the saturating power of the night
Not needed with the dawn of day.

Bill Grace

Limits Of A Casa G-D

The outside cat coming into the house
Is always a moment of anxiety for the casa god
Who has noted on more than one occasion
A certain massing of the inside forces
For what certainly looked like bush whack of the outsider

It is not that I lack either power or concern
But if G-d has any limits s/he knows
That in the struggle to get the hamburger through the door
Sometimes you don't even know till too late
That the most junior cat
Has also come under threat of attack.

Bill Grace

Lincoln's Greater Gift

Abe Lincoln freed the slaves
But his greater gift was this
For which he paid high price
That he held no fear of truth
This thing that could set all free
But binds the Pilots of this world.

Bill Grace

Line Inspired By Hermann Hesse's 'sidhartha'

The more truly you R free
The happier U will be.

Bill Grace

Line Worth Copying 21 December 2008

Found on a thrift store poster:

'Truth is the light that shines through the fog with out altering it.'

Bill Grace

Little Hitlers

The little Hitlers of the world are not a few
Their right to 'lebenstraum' not ending at your back
Instinct far too true to the attack
The question being how to give them their due
Forgiveness and inquiry helping greatly too
If we do not want to become one of them.

Bill Grace

Little League Minors

Bright sun, soft breeze
The teddy bear gently makes an underhand toss.
Slice! Whack! Twang! Run!
Thirty inches of athlete pegs the ball.
Fun as fundamentals
Minnesota summer.

Bill Grace

Little Legs

Little legs traveling so fast
A twelve year old going on twenty three
Growing up so fast before my eyes
A slight morning cough this sixth day of school
Announcing her goal of a year of perfect attendance
Silently breaking her father's heart.

Bill Grace

Little Life Event

Daughter requests chauffering to school
After the school run the donut boy is fun
Understands "the big decision" of a chocolate donut
The little girl next to me spills her milk
The little girl at the counter gently smiles
It is an appreciation that understand the trauma
Of spill from a carton of milk.

Bill Grace

Little Loves

Life has lots of little loves:

A full orb moon at two am

Sky of broken mackerel skin

Smile of the young burger girl

Neighbor with daughter at Halloween's door

Dog's cat policeing

Wife soundly sleeping when I can not.

Bill Grace

Little Old Lady On The Frigidaire

The photograph of the little old lady on the frigidaire
Is not the siren of once upon days
Nor empresario of her son as pawn
But this thing of age that comes to all
This thing we all try to stall.

Bill Grace

Little Peasant Dot

I am a little peasant dot amidst the greater sea
And certainly the important or even self important
Will not invest much more than a passing glance at me
But let my stroke be needed for their schemes
Let alone the hopes and power resident in their dreams
Then watch this dot become beam at the center of their eye.

Bill Grace

Locker Room Philosophers

It was the shower to be exact
The antagonists were naked
At thirty seven years past the event
I can still see his face.
The victim's face is lost.
It - the conversation - was heating up
I ducked out.
'What about the men who were lost? ' he demanded.
The response could not have been adequate
They came to blows right there in the shower room
A bloody nose for one at least, if memory serves
The man who asked the question and gave the blows
Was not a bully, if memory serves
Training for Viet Nam was not a happy deal, if memory serves.

Bill Grace

Love Poem On A Daughter Prompt

We are two yet more
scabbard and blade sea and shore
butterflies that touch following a deeper score
spirit at life's core
ebbing and flowing in forms of flesh.

Bill Grace

Ma Bailey And The Nickel Coke

I want some future time to know,
Once they both existed.

Bill Grace

Man Soliciting Work

The man came by the house soliciting work
The day after the work was done,
The day after the pine in the corner had been trimmed,
The day after I finally found men I felt I could trust
Who I even liked.
The broad brimmed hat - the dark sunglasses
Did not help his cause, did not let me get a look at him
The all important first impression being what it is
He looked like hell - shouting his inquiry
With a drive way between us.
He drove away hard in his truck and angry with himself
When I saw the young lad sitting beside him
I was sad that there was no victory for either of us.

Bill Grace

Marble Slab Visit

I did not realize
It was \$4.99 for a small ice cream
At 96* I did not care,
my goal was to escape the heat.

Even more than cool
the place had that peculiar odor -
pleasant for sure -
of all ice cream shops.
In all of my travels
I have never found a bad one.

Cinammon and cheesecake and chocolate
What combination to effect?
Choices are always difficult
even in an ice cream shop.

Bill Grace

Marine Corps Dog Lady

When the threads were bronze
That kept me separate
But before they turned to black
That would divide me even more
I met her in a grocery check out line
By what we mortals call chance.

If it was God or Devil that made the meeting
Only life beyond the grave can proof
But how strange that one so briefly met
Could cut and deeply
This ever striving soul.

Lean and forward and beautiful
She knew chaos when she saw it
And dispatched two pennies
To my rescue.

I wish I had said thank you
On the spot and invited her
To lunch or coffee or whatever
Was to be with so little introduction.

But I was fearful of her beauty
And an intensity of yearning
More powerful than sex
Her simple act of care had sparked.

Spark to dry tinder a fire makes
And months later I wonder at my cowardice
That hid behind stories of Will Stretch
And the gal he married who had turned down
A matrimonial proposal from
'Chesty' Puller a legendary marine.

A ring on my finger
And a ring on hers
These things attraction could not erase.
And hierarchy has its' morbid logic

But still in moments of dry marriage
I think about her
And feel the pull of two pennies
That may have carried more
Than clerks balancing their cents.

Bill Grace

Mark Twain's Daughter

I have heard the rumor
From one vastly more lettered than myself
That Mark Twain in his dotage
Had a circle of young women
With whom he met in public
There was no impropriety - no scandal
But Twain's daughter dissolved the group
For fear of censure.

My eleven year olds first gymnastic meet
Filled with the resplendent energy of the young
Even their pain and failure
Has taught me what the old man lost
Convinces me that pharises are alive and well
And with us to this very day.

Bill Grace

Marriage Blessing For A Wedding Couple

May this be the voice of those who love you.

May you climb the peaks together and in the valleys know the blessing of a constant consolation.

May you have good fortune that grows from a divine providence of care.

May your economics be frugal and constant.

May your faith ever deepen and death ever hold less terror for you.

May each day deepen you in mindfulness of the other.

In commitment may the poverty of the English word 'love' flower into the Greek ways of: storge, filios, eros and with God's help agape.

May your light be shared with all who touch your days this day and always.

and may these words be sealed by the one who is beyond name but whose prophets, most powerfully - Jesus, show us the way day by day.

Bill Grace

Marriage Mindfulness

Marriage is a process of constant courtship - small and large the things
Before you ask THE QUESTION ask and know the soul you ask
Are we friends first?
Is this the one to who I will give a constant mindfulness?
Where we share enough of the things too deep for speech
Pillars in the sea - enough for a foundation to hold against the years.

Bill Grace

Martyr In 2005

The New York Times informs of the death
Of Mr. Naim Rahim Yacoubi - an Iraqi
Who having cast his vote was killed by
Blast after a successful delivery of tea to election workers.
I would call him brother,
Though we have never met,
And baptize this adoption
With a tear for those of kindred flesh.

In some distant Galaxy
I hope God writes his name
In stars upon soft nights -
and if intuition can hold truth - suspect,
THAT spirit loves his fetching tea in kindness
Even more than the courage of his vote.

Bill Grace

Material Boy Approaching The Crib

Bob Lee's great line deserves an encore:

'Materialism is the philosophy that has captured the 20th century
with out firing a shot.'

My daughter of eight thinks the material quite sublime preferring
Disney in pink. My wife more discerning,
I struggle with my demons too.

The demon says it must have more.

'Feed me this pittance if you will and then you can have peace.'

It changes and morphs, sings and screams and plays a 1,000
tricks to keep its silent hold upon my soul.

Clever beyond my words to catch, it can not hide
the hunger of its bottomline that always asks for more.

Perhaps Nancy has given something of the antidote against
another, much more agreed upon, poison.

JUST SAY, NO!

Cheerfully remembering want is not need
and what you truly seek is beyond the mechanics of money
the purchase of a deeper self.

Bill Grace

Max Rosenthau

Father Cleary sat at table with Max many a day
But I don't think he rated a bounteous gift when Max came to visit
Both were guests in the great house across the street of youth
Father for years and Max for yearly one week stints.
The last time Max came was when his wife died
A man so profoundly broken
Even a fourteen year old could start to understand
That the desperation of his grief was the force that drove Max to Mass
Where Father from his view could not give communion to a Jew
And snapped the neck of something deep within me
That despite Father's great friendship
Never came back though I never said a word to Father Cleary.

Bill Grace

Mcdonalds Worker Observed

Watching the absolute efficiency of her moves
I realized that Jacques Ellul is correct
That we live in the age of technique
My hunch being that our cultures
Will become ever more linear things.

Only our great traditions proofed beyond institution
Christian, Muslim, Jew, Budhist, Other
Or any place or person where love exists,
And does not hope to manipulate,
Only in this can we even begin to hope
For that which will save us from the coming hardness.

Bill Grace

Mcnay Day

Entering the lawns of manicured perfection
As close to heaven as I will ever come
The top of my pyramid of heavens
Except Lake Placid's ancient stars
Except the naked frau with her naked cherubs
Three energies most primal.

Bill Grace

McNay Prompt A La Rebecca

Poetry-not drawing my form -
'Survival' a good but depleted norm
the FEBA veteran understands
with marrow that sings
with joy of life.

Bill Grace

Meditation – Good Friday

In distant lands our youth are slain
At home government grid lock is the game
Wonder at who our true leaders are
Gone the great optimisms of the past
Perhaps this somber energy
All the more appropriate
Considering this day we killed the Son of God.

Bill Grace

Meditation Before A Fluorescing Angel

The tree is up
The work is done
I wish I could say
It's all ben fun.

Beautiful toys on generous display
Drink with a friend of old comrade structure
Winter solstice of the pagan year
STOP! STOP! STOP! STOP! STOP!

As Jesus came and trod upon this sod
And if its true that he was God
Then all this abounding kitch is not cool
We need to return to school
To learn lessons of an even more quiet sort
Listen to the clock strike its hour and
To pray for all who are its victims
This sheen of visiting pagan peace
Solstice of an ancient faith
Takes us from this child's much deeper truth.

Bill Grace

Meeting For Worship

The night time ritual is this:
After story and the Bible story
Only the hall light burns
And in a relative darkness we dwell
This seven year touch of life that is our daughter
She supine in my Mother's old bed
I sitting on the white toy chest.
She often asks that I remain a while
And almost always I comply
And after shenanigans a silence comes
In which I wonder about God
Or perhaps even the ways of politicians.
It is our silent meeting for worship.
Almost always it is holy
Despite the missing facing bench.

Bill Grace

Meeting Stranger

The former green beret
turned author
talked writing
talked books and self publishing
talked about a gold star father.
□
I prodded -
I preened -
I offered support.

Never had I intended
to spend a morning
with this man.

God sends us strangers.

Was this man an angel
with the disability
of an arcade?

Was I listening
for God's whisper
where I did not expect
to hear?

How hard it is
to stop for strangers
with a heart focused
on a million things.

Bill Grace

Memorial Day 2006

It is a decent thing to grieve their loss
Their lives in unexpected Hi Lite upon history's altar
Their was no will to death
We pray their valor was a vision of service.

The young Marine with wire hands haunts me
Stopping in salute before the President's casket
His wire hands so visual a reminder of sacrifice
My mind can not escape that wire hand raised in final salute
It makes me salute the terrible loss - the unconscionable sacrifice -
Of men I have never met closer than a newspaper
And raise my trembling hand in return salute
Of an inadequate acknowledgement of debt.

Bill Grace

Mercy Arc - (1996 Chapbook)

Ark of mercy
Upon a dark night sea
Your portals framed in light
Whisper, fears to free.

A mercy Ark of vaulted steel
This war's wounded will not see
Ark of mercy your light tells
God's great grace towards me.

Bill Grace

Milk And Cookies

Milk and cookies end the day
A most strange way to welcome night
But night comes and sight is lost
The immediacy of cold and sweet
Seems to help the inevitable surrender to sleep
When will's tyranny is for the most part less or lost
Milk and cookies a good institution to help end the day
Especially when it seemed to move
Very much in its own determined way.

Bill Grace

Miss Dupre Remembered

Marooned at lunch with the lovely couple
Perhaps it could even be expected
Of one who flunked exploratory French,
That the shackle of not understanding
Could only have been loosened -
As it is with almost all great things -
Thirty years before.

Bill Grace

Missing Turtle

The object on the road came up so fast
At first glance turtle seemed an armadillo
No room to swerve to left or right
I elected to run over it
With wheels to left and right
Preserving life - honoring Schweizer's creed
A different form of prayer perhaps
Than the mindfulness for my friend's daughter
Who was having her first baby
At the same time that I was missing turtles.

Bill Grace

Mistaken Identity

For years I thought my face and being was real
But could never get swim goggles to truly seal
God sent lessons in the form of a child's size
Which fitting perfectly made me realize
The issue was not of degree
But where the operator's manual had tried to send me first.

Bill Grace

Mixed Day

The holiday brings the late afternoon call
A friend's son has been killed
We know it is too much for her to bear though we know she will
Still, I grieve this world
Where it can be a mother who has to bury a son.

Bill Grace

Moderation Is The Key

Moderation is the key

Buddha and Bill Grace guarantee.

Hollywood proclaims that: 'Greed is good! '

Details of the economic mess tells us that all of us should

Master a more wise model if at all we could.

Which leads us to other kingdoms beyond the buck

Moderation is still the key unless you have the greatest luck.

Bill Grace

Modern Samaritan

The former green beret
turned author
talked writing
talked books and self publishing
talked about a gold star father.
I listened
I prodded
I preened
I offered support.
Never had I intended
to lose a morning listening.

God sends us strangers.
Was this man an angel
with the disability
of an arcade?
Was I listening
for God's whisper?
How hard it is
to stop for strangers
with a heart focused
on a thousand other things.

Bill Grace

Mom's Only Sin

Mom's only sin

Was that she didn't love the books

Her brother did - became the doctor

Her sister did - became G.M.'s top dog before Toyota

She had her Latin lover

My Father, it was her only other sin.

Bill Grace

More Than Money

It is too simple to say
That greed had escaped its cage
Once there was a sense in the land
Of a thing called honor
You did not buy a house
You did not hope to keep
You did not make a loan
You knew could turn to stone.
The failure here is more than money.

Bill Grace

Morning Litany

Would you like an egg?

No thank you.

Would you like some orange juice?

No thank you.

Would you like some milk?

No thank you.

Would you like some hot chocolate?

No thank you.

Would you like some toast?

Yes, please.

Bill Grace

Morning's Cat Visitation

The morning visitation of the cat
Is such I do not want her to scat
Though the kissing thing is far too much
To mix with King David's Psalms and such
It is enough she cuddles near
Knows there is little she has to fear
But my concern is that the world will never work -
As these four paws experienced -
As peace is often something of a quirk.

Bill Grace

Morning's Silence

In morning's deep silence I know that they are there
Mother, Father, Aunts, Uncles - others who though gone could care
Great teachers, mentors, class mates - team mates who are no more
Rogue's for leaven and girl friends long from touch
Especially those fond illusions destined to never touch back
Or perhaps too beautiful to consider anything less than perfection
In silence they all speak and kiss - but only in silence.

Bill Grace

Morsel Of Shade

Morsel of shade in the parking lot
give thanks to God -
who gave us Jesus,
and a million other divinities
unknown,
some of them lurking in donut shops
who help me sing.

Bill Grace

Moses Before The Bush

When Moses stood before the bush
Drawn by fire that did not consume
He asked 'I AM' his name and was refused reply
A quest that stands until this day
Process theology and a Holden Caulfield world view
Both, respectfully acknowledged.

Bill Grace

Mr. Kaiser's Greatness

When Henry Kaiser had a son he named him Edgar
It is hard to be the son of a great name
From young Kaiser lessons are learned
The world does not easily understand.
I had to decline his invitation to bridge
But kept his chapbook gift 'thank you' letter.
'Passage' was inspired by the power of his jet.
Most I love him for the story I heard
Of his care for a toilet beneath the dignity of his accountant.
It is not only a woman who can stoop to conquer.

Bill Grace

Mrs. Goebbels

My wife convinced me
That the cat I thought was ugly
Was mine and hence her need for hers.
As in all acts of propaganda an element of truth
That got her, her desired second cat.

Bill Grace

Ms. Jekyll And Miss Hyde

The next door girl given to jeans and her art work
Is worth watching and investing an appropriate wave,
But I could not help but chuckle - after her graduation -
Seeing her transformed into interview
Folds of satin complete with high heels
Forcing me to marvel again at
The powers unleashed by a market society.

Bill Grace

Mundane

To the question:
Where does the time go?
A log now answers
this question,
the mundane.

Bill Grace

Mundane Things

It is in these mundane things
The cup of coffee, the child, cat, dog
That we must find our life
Let me dare not forget the wife
Protecting these calling us to our strife.
With age the grand has grown greatly suspect:
'Deus vult.'
'the world safe for democracy'
'iron curtain'
'the savior of Western Christian civilization
against the Bolshevick menace'
'Coke gives life'
Mundane things looking
Infinitely more worth of our trust.

Bill Grace

Mural A La Louise

In the McDonalds at the Walmart
As I wolf my plastic food
I study the happy mural of 50's life
That tells so many lies it is worth the challenge to count them
Black top over history's pain
To keep commercial flow
With the sureness of a murderer
Whose deeds still fail to impel contrition

Bill Grace

My Mother's Fierce Wisdom

When Uncle Don wanted to ship me off to boarding school
Despite his great status and being my father's boss
Mom said: No!
She claimed finances as the rationale
It was a lie.
She listened to good mother instincts which say:
"No one will love this child as much as I do,
I will not entrust (his or her) nurture to a stranger."
If you are determined to rear a President
It will be necessary to suppress this instinct.

A life time later I see she was correct and in my case
Home would be left when it was time - not forced -
By some march to become something
That Uncle Don not God intended.

Bill Grace

Name On The Wall

Staying in the Navy Lodge

There was the poster of a close up – a portion –

Of the Viet Nam War Memorial Wall

I looked for my name

But could not find it

Glad.

Bill Grace

Negu

Why the pastor's daughter died I can not tell you
Valiant Jessie at age twelve is lost to cancer
It was this style of tragedy that killed Claypool's marriage
Took his professional life from Southern Baptist
To Episcopal trajectories
Nothing derails as much as a child's death
Just the thought leaves a bitter taste
Where my tongue can not feel,
I have seen death before
It is not a stranger
It is part of life's formula that will always make me rage
RAGE AGAINST GOD
But the child taught me the phrase: NEGU
"Never ever give up! "
NEGU not a bad gift for an old man from a twelve year old
Perhaps I can re-gift it and leave it at the feet of God.

Bill Grace

Nelson

NELSON,
YOU TROUBLE MAKER!
my muse heard rumors
you are living next
to Martin Luther King,
down the street from Gandhi,
AND
Jesus has been elected mayor!

Bill Grace

Nelson Before Trafalgar

Like Nelson before Trafalgar:

'England expects every man to do his duty.'

I issue succinct philosophy to the dog

before the battle of the morning walk:

'Go potty! '

Bill Grace

New Year's Eve At An Early Morning Mall

Sitting in the mall I watch the folks pass
The kids texting on their phones
Sipping a stronger than expected Starbucks
Debating the wisdom of the item at Sears
(I decide to buy it)
Enjoying the bubbly female clerk's wisdom:
'We are all in this together, '
New Year's Eve at an early morning mall.

Bill Grace

New York Night Fire

In the canyons of the night
The fire engines howl like banshees
Give voice to a million tortured souls
That have no song nor can they speak.

Bill Grace

New York Times March 10,2014 E-Edition Prose Comment

As we live in a culture where words only count for their political significance, we have a problem. Both Captain and General apparently do not understand or are not able to be invested in the word "office" in the oath which they both took. Perhaps this sad situation is a testimony to the importance of military ethics in military curriculums.

Bill Grace

Newspaper Influence

The daily press brings me word
Of another soldier fallen
I light a candle in my heart
Proclaim it here that He is near
Especially for the fallen.

Bill Grace

Nickel And Dime

The bank offers an attractive interest rate
But charges for a counter check
Nickel and dime.

The airline offers an attractive fare
But charges when you check your bag
Nickel and dime.

We live in a time of nickel and dime
Where the only safety you could even begin to find
Is a struggle with an inner monster deep within
That helps avoid a place called sin.

Bill Grace

Nietzsche's Cross

When Nietzsche tells us "God is dead;
he died of his compassion for mankind."
The semicolon must be added
If our understanding is to be more complete.

Bill Grace

Night Flag - 7 (Patriotic Poetry)

Our flag at home lives in a window
Blunts with stained plastic strong morning rays
And is dwarfed on Vets, Memorial, and The Fourth by a fabric cousin.

My wondering wife thinks it strange practice
The time spent adjusting to correct back light
For when sun fails in the neighborhood
It is in darkness it shines in glory - scarlet and white.

Perhaps those passing by will notice;
Perhaps not even paper boys now they are no more;
Perhaps - perchance - because it is the bunting,
Of our valiant dead in blue -
Regardless, to me it is a sacred thing
This flag that shines at night
This flag of comfort to half century plus of sight.

Bill Grace

Night Flight

The tapestry of light passes beneath our wing
The wing dips left and right
Sun intimates her breaking presence
Daughter plays games beside me
I am not at the controls
God reigns.

Bill Grace

Night Home Vignette

We sit in the living room
She playing with her IPOD
I - writing.
very now and then
The puppy has launched
Across the floor
Triggered by the cat.
I will have Coke
for dinner.
Laurie has eaten
Her salad.
The dishwasher tells me
I am done.

Bill Grace

Night Light

Ten night lights
Cast back the dark
Two are always on and
Register against the day.

Of the other eight
My conduct towards
This slate is
One of care
For things so fair
To deny night
Even a fraction
Of its power.

Bill Grace

Night Light - 4

At bed time with acolyte precision
The night lights are turned on
First, the Mickey Mouse in daughter's room
Then downstairs bath and kitchen nook,
So that slowly in darkness
The house in silence is lit.
A strange ritual in the high sunset of my years
For one who has lived so many of Kipling's minutes
And strives to this very hour.

But it is to me a comfort that quiet light can see
Darkness through to day
For my hope is that in the dark some unseen hand
May grant me quiet light till my dark shall turn to day.

Bill Grace

Night Light On My Walk

Night light on my walk
A pleasant October temperature in Texas
Stray cat on porch - content.
Daughter models our latest hunch from the thrift store
The 'Russian Blue' strokes my foot
Assures me life's ok.
Wife reads in her big chair.
I read Laura Ingalls Wilder to kid.
Night light on my world.

Bill Grace

Night Rising

It seems strange to me
Not knowing if I am hot or cold
That I look at numbers
Which seem to reassure my vertigo
That at least the question was ok
Despite my lack of answer.

Bill Grace

Night Time Mix

Cat on lap
Laptop flat
The clock's tick
Night time mix.

Bill Grace

Nine Cities Of Six Lines

New York is ultimate but too old a memory to know
San Fran in Fall which is there summer
Prague, Paris and London see first across the sea
Berlin for a once divided world
Venice to debunk the hype
Casablanca - Fez when you've seen the rest.

Bill Grace

No Copyright - Gift At Christmas 2015

Before the sun's
early morning light
when it is too soon to write
a flood of images come
it is a gift.

When wife's breathing is hard
and mine is easy
it is a gift.

The day before Christmas
is warm
it is a gift.

The outside gray cat
sits In my lap
and purrs
it is a gift.

The Thursday Bible study
takes me on a tour
of the expanding universe,
the beauty of light year galaxies -
our stepping stones -
it is a gift.

The retired doctor
has time to talk
theology and biography
it is a gift.

At our Christmas Eve service
at the passing of the peace
the flame of love's power
was in such excess
I thought I saw tongues of fire
dancing over sanctuary heads
it was a gift,

and after the Mass -
wonder -
that God
would ever come
in such a humble package
it was a gift.

For a moment
the push of power and pleasure stop
it is a gift.

A poem given to the world
without copyright
a hope without name
it is a gift.

Bill Grace

No Return For Christmas

That first semester in Berkeley
Four months was not enough to separate from home
The job had not yet happened
Thanks to the Church Divinity School of the Pacific there was food and a room.
It was cold but not like upstate New York.
On subsequent years there would be trips back and forth
Crossing the continent almost became routine
In all this travel the only casualty
Was a briefcase over loaded with cameras
And my only sister's wedding.

Bill Grace

No Time For Pets

As one who had no time for pets
It seems most strange
Their introjection should be
Such a source of comfort.

Bill Grace

Noetic Spirit

There is another spirit that claims us
At least if we are not on our guard,
It will convince us by every psychological means
To buy and buy and buy and that numbers hold the truth.

Yet we feel, having everything, something is missing.
Saint Augustine has a great clue for us:
'Our hearts are restless till they rest in thee.'
God's spirit so different than noetic spirit.

Noetic spirit, Goebbels understood it well
Commissioned Riefenstahl to help consolidate
The fuhrer's power. A day of national mourning
When the Army was lost at Stalingrad.

Our spiritual pverty is in our prevalent theology
Not how many angels on the head of a pin
But our love of the car in the drive way
Or a thousand other idols, some I would be ashamed to name.

Noetic spirit has changed our land, our land the world.
Television may be the great herald of its coming.
I do not know an exact point of divide.
Sacrifice a word known only to our soldiers.
The man in the film said: 'Plastic! '

Bill Grace

Not All Men Are Created Equal

Not all men are created equal
despite the poetry of the great document
despite the learning of a life time,
nor are all cat litters.

Bill Grace

Nothing To Declare

This Veteran's Day - 11/11/11
Nothing to declare!

Bill Grace

Now And Then

Every now and then
I write poetry.
It happens between intervals
when the gnat size black flecks
on my cheek
from the head phones
have not been identified,
and a thousand other things
about which
the world does not take notice.

Bill Grace

Obama's Challenge

The challenge for our new President
Is to see beyond bad theology.
Especially our visual ones,
To think problems through to a third level,
To help us all be a little more safe,
A little less arrogant,
A little more true to what America might mean
If we were a little less of a consumption machine.

Bill Grace

Observation At A State Competition

If I had the courage to be arrested
Perhaps I could have intervened
The pre-pubescent child,
The pock marked skin of the grandmother,
The hair of the grandmother pulled tight in a bun,
The medals of the child
The bright red, white and blue fabric
holding a fleet of heavy medals around her neck,
Stained by tears of guilt or rejection -
She - the child - had not taken first in all places.
Shamed by the powerful grandmother
Shame she was not first in everything
Shame ten years of therapy would not lift.
I ache for that child and a society
Where only the top rung of the champions platform counts
Ultimately life will prove
We are all champions
When the grandmother is dead
When these words are no longer read
When life is seen as a process and not a point.

Bill Grace

Observed Matter

I watched the ice cream boy
Give the self proclaimed deaf mute
Half an hour's wage at where he worked when he was panhandled
Marveled at the joy with which he presented three dollar bills
I did not know the truth or falsehood of the man's marketing
The only power that logic and experience and conversation gave me
Was that I ran.

Bill Grace

Observing Trash Man

The inexperienced garbage rider
Inspected the white bag outside the recycle bin
And tossed it into the truck,
Making the second route's task easier by removing an item.
This nudged my liberal guilt into the realization
That even dog shit can be misunderstood as to its value
If proper packaging is in an improper vicinity.

Bill Grace

Ode To A Pop Corn Kernel - 1

Hail to thee blithe kernel!
Great assuager of the petty hunger
Born from a violent burst
Phoenix rising from an oil bed
Buttered legions that allay
Our empty stomachs in distress
Greasiness spreading from bowl to hands.

How it is that we abuse you,
Munch and crunch and sorely use you,
But if, oh golden kernel, you despair -
 Remember - that if we are fair,
The cow is great
But hasn't teeth which need repair.

Bill Grace

Of A Puppy And Heaven's Merriment

If truth is our being watched from heaven
It must produce a little merriment there
To see this old academic who could never get enough
Shouting with all the enthusiasm his years can muster:
"Go potty!"
To the thirteen week old puppy
In a voice vastly more of supplication and
encouragement and hope
Than even the slightest hint of command.

Bill Grace

Of Blessings And Stars

I don't know of blessings
Why they come to me
Nor why others seem
More fortunate at life's lottery.

Perhaps it is a gracious Lord
Perhaps just blind fate
That being blessed with so much
I just don't seek much more to take.

It was not always so
It will not always be,
Yet in these times I wonder
When for a moment the daily strife seems far,
Could it just possibly be
That upon some very distant star
There's an ultimate harmony
Whose days I hope to touch.

Bill Grace

Of Darkness And Projection

At Columbia Ruth was friends with Frost's daughter
Through Aunt Ruth I knew long before the Princeton Papers
The great poet had a dark side
Which may have made me more capable of understanding
That sin could be a real thing and darkness
Worth more in personal struggle than projection.

Bill Grace

Of Examined Scripts Refined

Soon it will not matter
All the illusions that were my days
When that which came from out the deep returns to clay
As we strive to live the scripts that we absorb
And discover all too often dynamic traitors to our deeper selves
Life a vastly more simple place with out our schemes
And God or time provides the energy that comes with other dreams
To help grant this world's night
A sliver of beauty's poetic light.

Bill Grace

Of Kindness And Bricks

Some build the world with kindness
Some build with bricks
The first is rarely seen
The second seems to stick
Given the lure of human pride
The fear of death we carry
Life could be infinitely improved in this meet
If we found the bricks a little less sweet.

Bill Grace

Of Love

Choose what you love wisely for it will tell
The million tales of your life
And grand quests are often disappointing
The starting blocks being so unequally placed
The great prize may not lie in the external race.

Our young one bounced into our bed
Limited English in her sweet head
Yet communicating with the heart
We had enormous fun with a game of hats
The object being to make the other laugh.

She wrote in Russian two nine zero two
Home address numbers in English too
And other things I can't keep score
Only wishing there'd been time for more.

So in this tale of respite from the earthly race
King, professor, parliamentarian, business pro,
After expending all you have for that you never could have been
Beyond mirage of self, love's loving water calls
And in simple acts of purest love
True refreshment lies.

Bill Grace

Of My Daughter's Sneaker And Marauding Cats

My daughter's sneaker lives upon the porch
For marauding cats it is a style of torch
That tells them they must not cross the line
To live and eat and fight where life is more sublime
Confusion for them for two others are welcome.

Bill Grace

Of My Human Sin

Of my sins I count the costs
Reach for Toynbee's great intellect
To help me try and understand
And with a man on a cross - grieve -
'Father - forgive me!
I do not understand what I do. '

Bill Grace

Of Panic And Calm Resolve

There are moments
When we are caught
Like the children in the vines
Of the first Harry Potter movie.
Which makes me think that the fly
Caught by the superior spider's web
Might do better to see if the strands
Rather than pulled against in a reliance on force
Could be separated through calm resolve
Which seems almost always to grant
A greater blessing than panic's furious ways.

Bill Grace

Of Popes And Saints

Mother Theresa and Gandhi will save us
John the XXIII we must respect
(The voice of Jesus being so far back
It has been muffled almost to a whisper.)
John Paul VI if we trust the press
Held great personal good in his love of structure.
Pius XII may have misread Hitler
His predecessor probably killed by Mussolini.
This thing of Peter's succession
Is no small complexity even for arm chair scholars.

Bill Grace

Of Rockets And Worldview

When men walked on the moon
The world became more safe for rockets
Newton won.
The New York Times
Proclaimed the victory in caps
Equal to a President's resignation
Greater than the atom bomb or killing microbes or Presidents.

This thing of moon walk
Ever travels with us.
It is for youth to carry
With brash certainty.
Age becomes more careful.

We must ever struggle with the details and the concepts
Carelessly built rockets can destroy.
Zeitgeist also is good fuel
It helps us understand the California Freeway or failing in business
Or a thousand other Waterloo's.

Bill Grace

Of Sons And Little Empires

Those who are held by little empires
Know the terror of security
Know that they must grow to more
Realize soon or late the king's vision is not their own,
A path unbidden calling them to its lure; success-failure-treachery
Which even comfort and security only forestalls.

Bill Grace

Of Toasters And Open Flames

I do not like an open flame
For in it there could be
A fuse of vastly more loss
Than aesthetic or even spiritual gain.

But flame for spirit is better
Than a world possessed of none
Imagine my sense of betrayal
When the toaster wanted fun
And in process headed towards burning the house down.

Bill Grace

Of Two Hammers

I gave a hammer to Al
Because he was great co-worker and pal
Although he called me 'Sir'
I was never taken in.

The hammer was silver not gold
Of no great worth did it hold
The silver was of steel, friendship and respect.

The hammer I kept is ugly.
It works well all the same
And is not insane
In trying to meet this world's demand for beauty.

Bill Grace

Of Words And Worth

The author held me with the power of his words

Words that lured to internet images of a trinity of artists:

Wolfgang Willrich

Boleslaw Czedekowski

Augustus John.

The portraits of Montgomery and Rommel were of strange souls I do not understand

They made me realize poetry is too limited - if all I have -

It is the visual artists who rule

Power belongs to the brush more than the pen

The visual image may well be all in helping us to locate sin.

Bill Grace

Olympian

The child took first in his sport nationally
A trinity of gold medals and almost predictable offers
'A once in a life time opportunity' the father assures me
amidst the chaos that follows.
It is an eight year game plan.
The word 'Olympic' is in the fancy title.
A strange sadness comes upon me.
The child of fourteen projecting great destiny at fifty four.
Dad is going to the Olympics, Junior has to tag along.
I secretly grieve and say nothing.
Forty five years in and out of therapy,
These waters of burnished ambition are known too well.
I will say nothing but I will grieve
The murder of a childhood
Where peculiar talent and circumstance had a wedding
Made a union where this child never stood a chance.

Bill Grace

On A 10 To 1 City Council Vote

The yellow bags over gas pumps
remind me how fragile is this civilization thing
that cannot bare a hurricane up the road
or memories of an evil civil war and its institutions.
It is what lies just below the surface that I fear.

My hope is watching the young lovers in Walmart
who have a frisky play about them as they enter
and the idiot savant who checks for a register receipt
to insure no more than a basket load of stuff is stolen.

Bill Grace

On A Church Council

When our chieftains resigned en masse
The tribe went into shock,
Not well to begin with, I went into shock
I did not understand that a distant council had the power to destroy us
Distance was no longer a protection
I did not understand the passions that would be released
Was caught in my blind spot
And simply was ashamed
To confess my ignorance as well as my fear
To those I count as friends.

Bill Grace

On A Moving Mountain

A mountain moved before the house
It is the garbage truck seen without glasses
Or was it only a hill, a mound, an eminence?
I doubt the driver cares about linguistic precision
Which all counts for very little
When a mountain moves.

Bill Grace

On A Partner's Parents

Before you marry know the parents well
So much will be revealed I cannot tell
For casual loves this insight in not dear -
Could well be ignored
But marriage is a different score
And frequently severe,
So know the molds
That mark the product well
It is better to buy than to be sold.

Bill Grace

On A Plumed Motorcycle Rider

The kid with the red Roman centurion plume on his helmet
Delights with the novelty of his whizzing by
And makes me question what he knows
Of the dangers posed by mixing loose gravel and speed,
To imitate the scions of old empire is his need,
I wonder if he knows more than an empire can also fall.

Bill Grace

On A Potential Placement Of My Papers

If it is true that Harvard/Andover will welcome my papers
I repent of any more poems being written upon cheap paper
Suspect Mother, though dead, must be rejoicing that at last I am in
This venerable institution (Harvard) which she said
She would scrub floors to see me through
Which I suspect was a lie
That a lot of love and luck and therapy have helped me see
Berkeley's environment not being too shabby a place
Presbyterian mother and Roman Catholic father not understanding
the achievement
Until he was dead and she living with the retired of Cornell.

At least I understood on an intuitive level
Berkeley had something of Harvard's power with vastly better sun.

Bill Grace

On A Senior Master Sergeant

Quietly she stands in line
Behind those of clearly lower rank
Her strips of seven noticeable against their three - four
Her face is taught she does not talk or smile
Carries a silent sadness about her
that takes my greeting with good accord
As she gathers food to bag and goes out the door
Captive pilgrim towards an eighth stripe more
Not even lunch allowed to break
The frightful pace of march.

Bill Grace

On A Small Touch Of Hunger

A small touch of hunger sometimes is good
True hunger in truth never being good
While false hunger is something for which to watch
Food being the great drug of our time
With which we anesthetize much more than hunger
Beware food as a drug which masks the deeper pain.

Bill Grace

On A Tragedy In Connecticut

In the face of madness armed
I will howl here
As one who has known guns
Yet come to fear violence
Age and God's grace
Forming this peculiar vision.

There is a bottom line
Technology is not neutral
War's dead and suffering testify
Technology is not neutral.

Hunting deer
With ball and powder
Is not the threat
Though I enjoy vastly more
The pleasure of watching them
Than eating them.

Technology is no more neutral
Than a bolt slamming into battery.
The dead sing this
In choruses from their graves,
 If we can care -
 understand
 what this means -
We can hear their song.

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Grace for its authorship

Bill Grace

On An E-Mail

The editor told me of 'God in Texas'
She felt it was incomplete
Perhaps she wanted a happy ending
I gave her what was in me
We did not have a conversation
about process theology and the
incompleteness of God,
We did not hear the tone of
each others voice or how long
I was kept on hold before being
granted entree by a secretary.

E-mail as blessing can also hold it curse.

Bill Grace

On An E-Mail Editor

The editor was correct who told me
'God in Texas' was incomplete
Perhaps she wanted a happy ending.
I gave her what was in me
We did not have a conversation about process theology
and the incompleteness of God
We did not hear the tone of each other's voice
Or how long I was kept on hold before being granted entree
by a secretary.
E-mail as blessing can also hold its curse.

Bill Grace

On An Execution

We executed in Texas once
A man whose life was hard
If remembered correctly his words
To the good Nun were hard
His last words were hard.

The young captain who he killed
Stealing his red sports car
Pleaded for his life
The captain coming to an understanding
Of true value in our bourgeois strife
Pleaded for his life
But this man required life and car
Property was not enough
He was hard.

I like this institution - execution - very little
But in this one case I will confess
And only from a reading of the press
That I am glad the killer's gone
If prison walls should fail to contain
A hatred for us all that was so great
That even pleading for your life
Was not an adequate penance
For the powers of a red sports car.

Bill Grace

On An Execution In Peripheral Vision

He dies with out saying a word
His protest was through the barrel of a gun
His adulation from one equally lost - equally angry,
It is the end, there is nothing to say.
I wonder if prison could ever tame such barbarity.
If there could be a quiet miralcle there and
The rock could be rolled away from his tomb.
If words could be spoken; false words, manipulating words,
defensive words, words of a truth too terrible to live or
even much more than momentarily bare
AND OVER THE YEARS
Feelings would come forth
Feelings long lost of a lonely, scared, fierce child -
wounded beyond recognition.
AND PERHAPS SOME DAY IN AN ULTIMATE
ACT OF FREEDOM
Words again but not of the first spirit -
the words of manipulation -
'I'm so terribly sorry for the wrong I did.'
This will never be for the evil one is gone
Taken from life as surely as he took others.
Death has taken its own with him
And with life its option for contrition.

Bill Grace

On Anger's Barrel

As one raised rural
Guns were not necessarily a big deal
City boys have more entertainment options.
It is the field that sings the siren's song
Of hunt and death.
It is when anger is juxtaposed over a barrel
That this is not cool.

Bill Grace

On Being A Reverend

I only use the title on the most starchy of occasions
Or when desperate to convey some semblance of propriety,
Or talking long distance with a bad connection or scared.
Hollywood does not like us
You can not count the films
Where we play fools.
This is easy to understand seeing
Almost no one ever likes their competition.
We both strive for the secret hearts of folks
With a reverend's success almost never showing up as a statistic.

Bill Grace

On Being Retired

The surprise in being well retired
Are the things that are no longer discretionary
To help keep you on the planet:
The pills, the exercise, the nutritional care
That in 20s,30s,40s,50s, could sometimes be slacked
But once through the big 50
Are on obligation
If you want to stay.

Bill Grace

On Being Trapped

Sometimes we are trapped
Better not to feel but to react
The lieutenant who under fire called a meeting of his men
To another realm of God's universe did his indecision send
With feelings will come the true safety of the day
But first you may have a dragon that you have to slay.

Bill Grace

On Board With Boorda

I have it on report I trust
That the Admiral on at least one occasion did not wear his rank
But even in an anonymous flight suit he held command.
(This story is from the greater family
- which I am sure is true -
Or I would not pass it on to you.)

This matter of an extra ribbon
That so enraged the press to kill him, I do not trust,
Though he himself would pull the trigger.
The press can be a ferocious sun
If you fly too close to them - at least two Navy they have claimed -
Best to leave the professionals to the professionals
And be open to their questions in letters
To which you will respond in kind.

Bill Grace

On Care And Currency

What if the currency were care?
French fries at McDonalds done,
In the smallest quantity conceivable.

Bill Grace

On Epistemology

The mystery is this
We do not truly know
And even history's powers are but our best guess
Little lights flickering in a vast darkness
In which we can only hope
That we choose correctly
When we choose something like a star.

Bill Grace

On Flushing And Other Acts Of Proper Resolution

I think that few things could be
Better than a gentle flushing society
If when we made a mess
Everyone said yes
To the proper resolution.

Bill Grace

On Keeping Faith

How vast the world's despair
Owned far past poet sensitivities
Where the death of hope oft means death
Or the living dead we all have met.

The lesson may be simply this
Love each day as fully as you can
Core requirements notwithstanding
And when error comes welcome the education
And recite: 'I will learn, again.'

Pay attention to keep your zipper up
But not too great a caution for what other's think
And practice prayer or other
That helps connect to source
And when the world says:
'There you are.'
You know the greater truth,
And keep faith with the strangeness of your path.

Bill Grace

On My Dog

The dog has decided not to die
He tells me with his bright eyes – sentinel ears
He is not done only the pain medication is done
The three inch step into the living room is too much
He will sleep above it
Until he decides it is time to go
Then I will cry my heart out
Like the child I am
Who has lost the toy
That is never to return.

Bill Grace

On Naushon (Halcyon Poems)

Gentle, the sea wind's caress
Parting the pasture mists
A sheep processional
Light year fires in an ebony pool
Living current glowing towards the sea
Night upon Naushon.

Bill Grace

On Recalling A Poem

Poetry can wound and alienate
Its' truth does not always heal
Just as I would not be disorderly in public
So I would not use poetry poorly
When its shirt tail of emotions hang out too far
It is best to tuck them in
Acknowledge the failure
And press forward
Against the storm.

Bill Grace

On Safe Harbor

If I am in safe harbor
I freely declare it here
That no merit of mine bought it
Such are the treacheries witnessed
The floundering of ships more intelligent, more ruthless
It is some grace from afar
Perhaps Mother's troubled vision
That even from her grave
Bestowed a love that even death honored
An eternity five senses will never comprehend.

Bill Grace

On Sandy's "time"

The animal is not ready to die
I need an "it is ok to let me go"
From him before we kill him
I have seen the damage to a friend
Of being handed bullet and gun ala country
Death being reduced to the mechanical
I have learned with time a better way
There is the vet who has helped the dog to stay
A small prick and eternal freedom from all pain
Then the drug that stops the heart and breaks mine
It will be the thing to do
When Sandy tells us that his time is due

Bill Grace

On Shoeing The American President

The fellow who threw the shoe
Knew exactly what he would do
I wonder if there will be a future pay off
For having given his world so definitive a statement
Of a supremely dark disdain.

Bush, it seems to me, was never known as an open man
This event could confirm the wisdom of that stand
Of a quarter back wise enough to almost always stay behind his line.
In youth I would have thought such an action fine
But time and growing a hair more wise
Has helped me understand the calculus of leaders and led a little more
The future is what will tell us what is in store
And sustain or deny the statement of a flying shoe.

Bill Grace

On The Edge Of A Poem

I always seem to live on the edge of a poem
It doesn't seem to matter where I roam
Or time of day or money or its lack
Frost, Dickinson, Shakespeare, Donne -
Their words echo in my mind, I find them fun.
Unlike them I have no great words to give
Especially with a mind that's more and more a sieve
Yet while I breathe I always seem to live
On the edge of a poem.

Bill Grace

On Torture

In the delirium of torture
Rommel's name was thrown and
His suicide was forced.
This general who had burned the Fuhrer's order
To kill the commandos sent to kill him
Was not much for murder
War itself holding sufficient blood.
His contempt was so great in death
The Nazi's closed his coffin
Threw the last great party of their Reich.
Hitler lost his best general that he needed badly.
We need to learn this history lesson also
As we loose much when we turn
A blind eye to this thing called torture.

Bill Grace

On Wearing A Father's Slippers

I wear my father's slippers
This stern man who built a school
And taught of Depression deprivations with sparse words
By the faithful folding of toilet paper.

His shoes are also now my own - worn on special occasions,
And there is nothing ill his being still and put away in all this acquisition.
In these matters one reality is ultimately clear;
It is far better to try to fill your father's slippers
Than to try to fill his shoes.

Bill Grace

One Comic On Death

I believe it was Grady Nut who said - loosely quoted:

'You look back on the edge of death and say

With a hearty laugh - I'm glad I did that.'

At our exit I wonder if the best question may be

Did we enjoy as much as possible

the struggle of our stride across the stage?

.

Bill Grace

One Great Poem

For the poet the quest
Is for that one great poem
Sonnets from the Portuguese #43
E.B.B. did not know
She had created our greatest love poem
I can almost hear her chirp to Robert:
'I want you to hear something I have written.'
She did not know though perhaps she would care
It was her one great poem.

Bill Grace

One Life

first surgery

Mom takes me from Dad

great teachers

Cold of Upstate New York

hubris

college - great teachers

second surgery

hubris and first poetry

Army combat simulation range

teaching

corporate experience

pneumonia

Philadelphia Pendle Hill

Sidhartha leaves the Shire

inner city teaching

sex

a strange call

First Chapbook of poetry

Berkeley - seminary

sex and lovers

more great teachers

the great professor

the great cancer hospital corrective

second lieutenant

more hospital corrective

Kind Corpus Christi dentist

a silver dollar from G. Con Smith

Dad dies

industrial baker

street kids

drug dealer in the board room

Desert Storm deployment to Oxford

Germany and Europe

friends with a big Mercedes

preaching to a sea of faces

politically incorrect

job assassination

Home - back to the 433rd Airlift Wing (Air Force Reserve Command)

marriage

433 years
marriage
Mom dies
daughter from Russia
metanoia
lieutenant colonel retired

thee cats, a rat and a mortgage
poetry always poetry,
the song that continues.

Bill Grace

One Poem A Day

One poem a day
Demonstrates plenty to say.

Bill Grace

One Postulate On The Poetic Order

The world is filled with poets
It is not totally the hope of being read
Or even some life beyond our graves
But rather the celebration that we have a voice
With which the reader joins in interest
And then to our eternal elation
For a moment we are not alone and sing.

Bill Grace

One Secret Worth Eight Lines

Jean Cluett knew the great secret
That we engrave on each other's hearts
With words even casually spoken.

Clue told me of the first chapbook
She did not believe it held any great poetry
And probably was correct
Very little in life being truly great

Especially, if your father founded Arrow shirts.

Bill Grace

One Thought On History

The hardest part of honest history is discovery of sin
but the bitter disappointment in this discovery
is that there is no way to cash it in.

Bill Grace

One Tortoise's Reflection In Retirement

In the twenty year race that Colin Powell entered
Expecting to end with a lieutenant colonel's leaf
You can not underestimate the benefit of being
A wise and daily briefer of the President,
Not all can have such singular good fortune.

Still I reflect on all those hares
Who broke their main springs
Unable to grasp the Secretary's wisdom
Reaching for stars that turned to bars
For at least one who I knew to be the best.

This thing of hierarchy is a necessary evil
Where committees can not be convened to determine
From which roof top fire is coming
Battle is no place for democracy or consensus.

Cream may rise to the top or it may not
Position in a milk bottle
Can not gurantee the depth of butter fat;
The driver here not so much money
As pride - long held a deadly sin -
My spirit impoverished friends
Who will do anything to win
Would do better to flow towards
What was once the future Secretary's prize,
To release the dreadful drag of a fevered ambition.

Bill Grace

Only Literature Has An Enduring Voice

Only literature has an enduring voice
In this area I know no other choice
But beyond the grave
There is even a more powerful thing that saves
The place where love's little things
Lie resident in a heart.

Bill Grace

Oswald Wanted To Be Somebody

Oswald wanted to be somebody
There is a lesson in this for the rest of us
Who are miffed by Kipling's lines:
'If you can meet with triumph and disaster
And greet those two imposters just the same.'
It is in loving the process of our lives
That some treasure may wait at the end.

Bill Grace

Our Day

We can only take our day
And hope in some small way
That we have had our say
And left the world a little better
Than before our stay.

Bill Grace

Outing

The dog is taken out
wife's torn shirt changed
food eaten
Pastor sings his song
Daughter hooks up
with old girl friend
lunch
beer with lunch
book store
post beer coffee
dog is taken out
poetry records
an outing.

Bill Grace

Outing II

The dog is taken out
wife's torn shirt changed
food eaten
Pastor sings his song
daughter hooks up
with old girl friend
beer with lunch
post beer coffee
book store
dog is taken out
poetry records
an outing.

Bill Grace

Owned By House

When you buy your home
And the bank helps you
All the bank wants is there monthly check
But you must give the myriad minutes
To keep your castle as you want it
Remember it is an unyoked partnership
Poetry bearing its portion of the undeclared costs.

Bill Grace

Pack Animal

It is said the dog is a pack animal
We are all pack animals
The question is having or finding
An appropriate pack with which to run.

Bill Grace

Padre Island National Sea Shore

The beach births relics
Happy flesh walks by
They signal the end of our stay
The waves sing their shore meeting chorus
On the sand fish rot, daughter poles at a jelly fish
A sky of confederate gray billows tell of approaching storm
At the furthest extremity a tree has wrecked
Ship like a limb juts as mast
It is going no where it is so well beached
With Viking head it defies ever breaking waves.
In the face of this eternity - I celebrate
Knowing my miniscule part
Knowing "Invictus" is a very separate issue.

Bill Grace

Paper And Ink - 1

It is strange that God should marry paper and ink
The two being so uniquely their own
One should have no use for the other
But combined by force of hand they marry quite nicely,
And in this more than a tale of reading is told.

Bill Grace

Paring Knife

Paring knife - weapon? or
Instrument for the careful removing of strawberry hulls?
It is not the tool that is evil.

Bill Grace

Paris Hilton's Locks

Paris has been sued for wearing another's locks
I wish we could understand how much more is at stake here
Than the thirty five million being asked.

Bill Grace

Passing On The Things We Love

My father loved his building of his school
Was pierced I didn't want the shiredom
But with feeble tools went out to grow
The things that grant a bliss
Less of ecstasy than constant moment
And in all of this learned a lesson
There is no guarantee to pass on
The things we love to another.

Bill Grace

Passion A Poem Of Pure Autobiography

Girls were off limits.
At the school pool I could look but not touch.
In undergraduate days still interested
but very, very careful.

The passion was writing.
First there was the student newspaper.
Next a column "School Notes" in the small town weekly.
Then letters in the small city daily.
More letters in the big city daily.
Culminating in a letter quoted by Joe Kaslow
in The New York Herald Tribune and two lines extorted
from Edith Wharton at Newsweek that gave a credit.

A lot of huff and puff before graduating from high school
but the passion had to go somewhere
and girls were off limits.

Bill Grace

Pastoral Care By Internet

Pastoral care by internet
Is a very strange thing
Where I try to share
What survival of three wars,
Plus those who loved me greatly,
Have allowed me to glean.
Reality is not as it may seem.
This is true
And here it is
My gift to you.

Bill Grace

Pastoral Epistemology

Because we believe the material life is good
We test it and find this in it
Quite often ignoring to our detriment
The other plane called spirit.

A classic case of 'either-or' not untypical of European thought
The challenge is to come to Asia's wisdom of 'both-and'
And expand our possibilities.

Bill Grace

Pause Before Adoration

If the Pharisees and Saducees were the elites of their day
Jesus did not come to save them
Though in history they would turn his cross to sword
And mangle many others as surely in his name
As that solitary man, today – we adore upon his tree.

Bill Grace

Pedigreed Pencil

My friend gave me a pencil with a pedigree
He did not know it only partially mattered to me
Writes just fine as does this other yet
I am still grateful for the gift
Of the pencil with the pedigree.

Bill Grace

Pencil Power

Mrs. Arnold, one comment please!

In your insistence that we learn to write in ink
During that frightful transition sometimes called middle school
You could not know how severely the world would change
Even after you were in your grave.

So while the enthronement of ink's nonfading virtue
Is nice and appropriate for history and many social things
Your love could not know Viet Nam would be my war
And pencil power would save me from it.

For though much maligned in my thinking which was yours
The humble pencil has two stellar virtues with all due respect to ink technology
The leaded line is faint but more than adequate to a day's survival
And even more important submits comfortably in change
To its eraser's power.

Bill Grace

Pendle Hill Bio - 4

To this fair Hill has come the quest
To learn from whence the main spring comes
Of pulse and thrust of currents held within
And of many natures to discover that most true
The very essence to help see through
This conscious passage on a planet - TIME -
That God has entrusted to fragile hands.

Bill Grace

Penny Under Ice

A penny under ice
is not a penny
Abe's profile looms
and on its other side
architecture calls
to help sanctify a life.

A penny under thin convex ice
is convoluted
is magnified
is far more than a penny.

Bill Grace

Pension Of \$16.23 American

Grandma Grace worked for Gorton's of Gloucester
For more years of labor than I know
Her pension check of \$16.23 a month
Kept her nicely in postage stamps
For letters and even a parcel or two
Mailed from her son's home.

She was not of nor ever aspired to the managerial class
It was her son's success that protected her
Not twenty plus years of faithful service sorting fish.

Bill Grace

Perhaps

Perhaps some day
Creatures of another universe
Will wonder at these words
And find a spirit to their liking
Amidst their judgement of the craft.

Bill Grace

Petitionary Prayer To A God Who Suffers With Us Upon Lighting A Candle In The Dark

If you hear my prayer
May your spirit go before them in the dark
And touch the darkness of my heart
With you light that grants to me the sight
To see the sites of worldly suffering
Courage to hope that there is more beyond and
Grace to help to heal upon this darkling plane.

Bill Grace

Phoo On You Robert Browning!

Phoo on you Robert Browning
Not for your poetry but your theology:

'God's in his heaven
All's right with the world.'

No - God is with us
We turn from the mangled corpse on the cross
Our strivings, our struggles, our pride
Keep us from timeless glazed eyes

No - Ronald Reagan would have loved you
My Mother quoted you
God is with us
'Gott mit uns'
On the belt buckles of an army with broken crosses
That would have conquered the world.

Bill Grace

Pieces

It is a peculiar pain
to see the pieces all around
the nation that stopped Hitler
lost in smart phones but stupid
and self
and entertainment
money as a God
no mystery
little sacrifice
Hitler – only the most dim name
pieces of the nation
that stopped him -
the Gold star mother -
forgotten.

Bill Grace

Pilate's Kingdom - 3

When I see the human pain
That is hidden in the lives of those I would love
I ask the fearful question
Why?
And discover two men face to face
One asking - 'What is truth? ' -
too busy for reply,
The other pointing to it plainly.

Pilate's sin was in his hurry,
Asking, but not waiting, not willing to hear.
His sin is ours.
It was his speed that killed our Lord.
Functionaries are easily found to drive hate's nails.
This time will never bind.

So, again we come to the cycle's end.
Challenged to start a beginning of
Humility resting in His Father.

Our pride will be the first casualty
And our lives like His may lead to a cross,
And probably will if we take this whole thing seriously -
He doesn't promise us a good time. He never did.

I begin to understand
Why those well intentioned nuns
Could only give my youthful mind
A fraction of this thing called - Truth.

Bill Grace

Pilgrimage Of The Ersatz Russian Blue

We thought mistakenly it was a Russian Blue
This misconception gave value to her too
A stray cat to kitty transformation
Despite understanding the white spot more
Barred our ever showing her the door.

Bill Grace

Pill Poem

There is a tyranny to pills
That help keep a life intact -
Foremost are the pills to hold stomach acid's back
Then pills that help keep the mind on track,
Special pills for prostate, even pills for poluted air
My life and that of many others
A mess with out their fare of care.

Bill Grace

Pills

Pills to help the blood to flow
Pills to keep a stomach's acid low
Pills that on occasion can help to breathe
Even pills to help throw post fifty seed
And the pills of final fix
Are the pills maintaining focus on this mix.

Bill Grace

Pink Magic's Aura - Poetry For Helen (In Construction)

The young voice at the end of the phone
gave me instructions
where with who and when to report
a number to check with
on the nature of financial obligations
Google maps helped
find the location.

That morning there was
merciful fog.
I knew my name.
Could not remember
the first name of my physician – Mario.
Medications long familiar
escaped memory.
the staff was kind
understanding anxiety and fasting.
When the doctor came
I forced technical questions
he warmed when he understood
I cared about my treatment
perhaps all physicians are brusque
I felt like a log floating
on a vast medical care river.□
Not too much of death's spectre this day
the task being
to burn off the bad cells
before they became cancerous.

I would feel
after the procedure
like I was struck by a truck
in the center of my chest.
For nutrition a day later
no solid food
need apply.
In all this dismalness

the hope of 'pink magic'
was held out.

The pharmacy
pushed the prescription
'pink magic' was white
it is prescribed
to help retard pain
I did not know
but I now know
its "Pink Magic" aura
is hope

and it is white
and there is
some magic
less pain
and there is hope.

Bill Grace

Pioneers

Pioneers always suffer
They are the ones who believe
but do not know.
The ones who tamed a land
The ones who sailed the sea
and air and outer space
The ones who explore the
mind's and society's dark caverns
The ones who have made
the divine more accessible
Scientists and medical folk with passion
to heal or interdict our scourges
I admire them all.

Bill Grace

Plastic

Am I the plastic in my pocket?
Bad picture - good - it doesn't seem to matter
To authorities that's who I am,
With all the rights and privileges attending there to
Including sales tax.

Bill Grace

Plastic-Leather-Steel-Paper-Fabric-Ice

plastic, leather, steel, paper, fabric, ice,
six word reduction of a life
wonder at the amount of strife
that in summation gives
only the burp found here

Bill Grace

Plates From Fifteen Years Of Marriage

The dishes help tell the story.

First there were the Christian plates
The ones with the subtle crosses built into a floral pattern,
Nothing obvious
but colorful enough to fill a dishwasher
as a welcome gift.

Then there was Pfaltzgraff in the Amalfi style
Urbane with a hint of assertive color acknowledging
things had been made respectable
by the benefit of clergy

USA made china from a Texas thrift shop

Christmas china by Lenox preceded
by plastic ones on sale

And always the Corning Corelle wear from various Walmarts

The most important plate
was the one I broke
and did not understand
its emotional implications
a tidal wave of recrimination
that took two weeks to heal
with scars surfacing to this day

Finally, the subtle pattern we both like.

Why does Hollywood
so often make this marriage thing
look easy?

Bill Grace

Plowing After The Storm By Kenyon Ray Simpson

Sky is blue
Snow is white
I think I'll take
Another bite.

Bill Grace

Plug Horse?

Race horse, war horse, plug horse

Plug horse?

Yes, for those wo plug along.

Bill Grace

Poem For Future Title

As one who took thirty years
To move from contemporary to classic Haiku
I have come to appreciate Jean Cluett's wisdom
That the first chapbook did not hold great poetry
It is ok to be small even almost invisible
This can be the gain of even an entire life well lived.

Bill Grace

Poem For My Wife – Like A Cobbler’s Child

You said to me: You write about everything
But you have never written a poem for me.
If I am defensive it will not help us
There is no joy in wounding the woman with whom you sleep
Poetry does not produce money
Like the cobbler’s children you are the last to have shoes
But unlike the cobbler’s kid
These words can’t protect you
From even a little snow.

Bill Grace

Poem From A Sabbath

Newton's gift was great
As is mechanical power
The struggle is in power's center
To extricate self from this part
Of a spinning wheel.

Bill Grace

Poem Genesis

When Arthur Hugh Clough writes:
Where Lies the Land to Which the Ship Does Go
Repeats its first quatrain again as the last
Does he plant the idea with Robert Frost
for the last two repetitious lines
that so brilliantly end
'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening'

Bill Grace

Poem Genesis II

When Arthur Hugh Clough writes:
'Where Lies the Land to Which the Ship Does Go'
repeats its first quatrain again as the last
does he plant the idea with Robert Frost
for the last two repetitious lines
that so brilliantly end
'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening'?

Bill Grace

Poem Genesis Iii

When Arthur Hugh Clough writes:
'Where Lies the Land to Which the Ship Does Go'
repeats its first quatrain again as the last
does he plant the idea with Robert Frost
for the last two repetitious lines
that so brilliantly end
'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening'?
Past is prologue even in poetry.

Bill Grace

Poem Genesis Iv

When Arthur Hugh Clough writes:
'Where Lies the Land to Which the Ship Does Go'
repeats its first quatrain again as the last
does he plant the idea with Robert Frost
for the last two repetitious lines
that so brilliantly end
'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening'?
Past is prologue even in poetry.

Bill Grace

Poem Of Future Title

I can only read them for a little while
The truly good poets
I can not read them out loud
My wife does not find them gift
I marvel at their fluid minds
The reading of others they have done
While a poor chapbook of poems
Didn't even make it to our altar rail.

Bill Grace

Poem Of Molten Title #2

We spend our lives driving through things
Only to discover quite late that they are only things
And the great value we attach to them
Is far less than their actual worth.

Own your: watch, car, closed gate mansion, title
Beware their auras and pawn shop values
The thing my mother in the wisdom of her greatest years confirmed
Still, they are only things.

Climb your mountain of achievement
Discover that the climb is greater than the summit
Life has the potential for the wise and humble to be a process
And this - even a point called death - can not defeat.

Bill Grace

Poem Of Molten Title #3

I wonder if our struggle is like my dog's
Who occupying affection's center
Snarls at thecat from fear of loss
When love for both is adequate enough.
I wonder how often my snarl is an unnecessary thing.

Bill Grace

Poem Of Molten Title #4

I love the growing power of the day
That manifests in color gray
And holds within its brightening power
A sky vault blue for all to see.

I love least those of great ambition
Being one myself
And knowing from good counsel
The darkness of this side
It is no wonder then I love them least
Loveing that which is within me the same.

Bill Grace

Poem Of Molten Title #5

These lines are lost, no critic will help you find them
But we were lovers
My soul too fractured to consummate the deal or
To understand the goodness that you offered.
So thank you for the sweet communion
To have loved once even incompletely
Is still a gain.

Bill Grace

Poem Of Molten Title #6

In that time when Revereware
Might have meant something to the public
The president of that company told this story:
During the great depression he owned a gas station
Business was not good
He washed the windshield of every car
Perhaps it was one block perhaps four
A lot of early morning windshields
On a gratuitous compass rose
His business turned successful.

Yesterday a call from 'Curves'
A personal touch for sure
An honorable formula for success.
Some things just don't change
Government can't solve it all.

Copyright retained.

Bill Grace

Poem Of Pure Autobiography - An Adolescent's Syllogistic Reasoning

When a child I was lonely
Being fairly well locked in by adult influence
I noticed those with student office had friends
With position in student council I noticed
I was still lonely
Only much later learning about syllogistic reasoning
That allowed me to understand
That you have office because you have friends
Not that because you have office you have friends.

Bill Grace

Poem Place Under Construction

There once was a poem here named Hubris
Which for some reason to the poem hunter system wouldn't allow me to
removeus

So the space was renamed
And the title quite changed
My hat's off to you Ogden
For helping this goofus.

Bill Grace

Poemhunter Missionary

I encourage all I meet
who tell me of their poems
that if they want to publish
in that terrible ring called poetry
of
so that they will suffer a little less in silence
from the world's indifference
knowing other poets are watching.

Bill Grace

Poet Genes

Going through the old photographs
a four years old in Dad's arms -
naked four month old on a lamb's wool blanket -
my sister and I talk of Pop's love of opera
and
the toy closet find
of the inscribed poetry anthology
a trophy presented to Dad in junior high for
winning a poetry memorization contest
these things for a man
who subsequently wrote in concrete, steal, and brick
and claimed an emotion
only when they handed
Jackie the flag.

Bill Grace

Poetry

A little bit each day
In hope that it will stay
Shadow and light in place
Relying on a greater grace
To help stay this earthly race.

Bill Grace

Poetry And Planes

Poetry and Planes

provide platforms to see the world

from above -

the world does not need them -

an intimation of heaven

seeing everything for just the briefest moment

from a different perspective.

Bill Grace

Poetry As A Garden

I tend my poems as garden
The misspelled word thrown out as weed
An "a" or "the" examined for its impact and allowed to stay
Perhaps even a whole poem tilled over after sober reflection
Past the molten moment of creation
A poem can be tended as a garden thing.

Bill Grace

Poetry As Prayer

Poetry as prayer is given in a daily way
In hope of insight bright
Yet even more in hope of afterglow
From the passage of the years
Legacy being a far too heavy word.

The issue seems to be life's market
Where time and money almost govern all
Poetry seems to be the exception of this greater day
That steadily takes nuns from us
In visions of a richer plane.

We vote with time and ink and money
For what we truly hold to be
The vision of reality and sometimes
God will grant a prayer
We don't know how it works or where.

So given that each breath is gift
That comes in daily power from afar
I'll celebrate with ink and paper
The sad madness of it all
And publish feeble lines for free
That celebrate God's majesty
Beyond this darkling plane.

Bill Grace

Poetry Definition # 7

Poetry is a state
of being
from which comes
the poem.

Bill Grace

Poetry For A Therapist

The key is in the modulation
The passion of our youth
Does not leave with age
It transmutes.

Our task is not so much to break the ego's lock -
This is the mechanical thing that can be dangerous -
But to find and integrate the wounds
See the many blessings clearly - perhaps for the first time -
And take a step forward towards becoming ever more whole.

Bill Grace

Poetry In Commerce #1

Medicine yucky?
Mom is lucky.
Now you can savor
and pick your flavor!
 Only \$2.99

Found at a Walgreen's pharmacy in August of 2010

Bill Grace

Poetry In Commerce Number One

Medicine yucky?
Mom is lucky.
Now you can savor
and pick your flavor!
 Only \$2.99

Found at a Walgreen's pharmacy in August of 2010

Bill Grace

Poetry Of Linda Houlden Published With Permission - Homage To Octavio Paz

Speak now in words with no shadows,
falling crystal drops into canyons of tomorrow,
where honey colored butterflies
fly up in startled swarms above flowers
planted centuries ago by girls wearing pink dresses with
lace at the collars.

Speak now in words gentle as snow flakes
blowing against a face you love and have remembered
for so long it has become your own soul
dressed in robes of crimson and saffron silk.

Speak now in words scented with a strange music
which dances over meadows, thru tree tops,
and into open windows,
when you cannot find the next chapter in this you are dreaming.
When night black and silent,
invites your true voice to speak.

Bill Grace

Poetry Of Linda Houlden Published With Permission - Homage To Octavio Paz II

Speak now in words with no shadows,
falling crystal drops into canyons of tomorrow,
where honey colored butterflys
fly up in startled swarms above flowers
planted centuries ago by girls wearing pink dresses with
lace at the collars.

Speak now in words gentle as snow flakes
blowing against a face you love and have remembered
for so long it has become your own soul
dressed in robes of crimson and saffron silk.

Speak now in words scented with a strange music
which dances over meadows, thru tree tops,
and into open windows,
when you cannot find the next chapter in this you are dreaming.
When night black and silent,
invites your true voice to speak.

Bill Grace

Poetry Seminar Waves

After the seminar I realized there was more to it than

My favorite quote from Rilke:

“Go into the depths in which your life takes rise

There you will find the answer to the question

If you must create.”

Public knowledge - public language; for poetry

Seems to be the necessary formula for balance.

Big questions I do not know enough to wisely ask

For starters back to Ciardi's How Does a Poem Mean?

Fifty years after news letter publications

I'm learning how to write a poem,

Asking a few deeper questions

About this business of being swept away.

Bill Grace

Poets Are - One Line Of Definition

Poets are the crickets chirping in life's night.

Bill Grace

Poison Gas At Bolimov

During the Great War
At Bolimov poison gas was first used
In the executive suite the sensitivities of a Marshall were lacking
The attack failed
This was no machine gun against the Zulus,
The stage was set for even greater horror
Whose face I have seen in a painting
That welcomed at the Imperial War Museum for many years
But on last visiting London
It seems to have been misplaced.

Bill Grace

Poohee!

My daughter informs me
My poetry is - Poohee!
Take the name, Pooh
Add a long e as in Lee
Make it explode from your mouth
A worthy addition to the slang lexicon of English.
Poohee!

Bill Grace

Poor Man's Haiku

Wind through bamboo
Black marks can not grant you
The beauty of a sound.

Bill Grace

Poor Mike

Poor Mike never got the recognition he deserved
Tougher than the IRS, persevering to a military pinnacle called Chief
The discipline to cut his weight in half
This entrepreneur extraordinaire
Found even his sports cars and \$70,000 watch
Were not enough to fill the void within that drove him
To make the front page in not such a happy way
That many married men if honest would acknowledge
That at least once they had a similar impulse
To want to murder their wife
But lacked Mike's stuff adequate to even begin to plan.

Bill Grace

'Pop' My Rock

Dad, I hope you know
How good you truly were
Despite tri-decade war
With a son who only very slowly understood.

The day I burned your timber reserve
And trembling went to tell you
To muted staff amusement
My fear did not anticipate your congratulations
That I had cleared that blasted dump!

I just wish you had come to hear me speak
Languague always seems to have been my thing
Charming Mary Pickford at four
Only presaged words before the assembled
But it was much easier to find me in the paper
Than to come and listen to your son.

You built your school
I earned degrees
And far too late
We found each other.

I went crazy at your death
Worked at baking bread armadas
Worked with kids off the street
The military was actually vacation
From the pain of losing you with out good by
For you never saw me speak
To a small ocean of the young
And do it well.

My fear is heaven won't be place
And I will go into that night
Crying with despair of your not being there
That we might continue to repair
The carnage that false pride worked
Between a father and a son who knew only how to speak.

Dad - shoes and a watch was not enough to give
From a fairly humble kid
Who didn't know that more than anything
I just wanted your arms of love.

Bill Grace

Pope Funeral

Of the great who came to see him off
I wonder how many listened to his words
That mitigate the drive of power that politics must be
And mocks the better struggles of the holy sea
If some semblance of this holy man's
Last communication was received
That even with all the world assembled
The final utterance is a simple box.

Bill Grace

Pop's Viet Nam Verve

My Dad was on life's whole a man of few words
But he had something running through his rough veins
That in grade school won a prize for poetic elocution
I found the prize of proof in the toy closet
And was surprised in youth.

We could not discuss Viet Nam as others did
It was reading Bernard Fall that helped me to see
But Dad had a surge of verve on this issue:
'We had no god damn business being there in the first place
And once we were there we didn't know how to get the hell out.'
An old War II vet's concise and poetic summary it seems to me
Of the nasty, fog filled and complicated war
That could well have killed his son.

Bill Grace

Positive Side Of A Drink

After a drink
I do not take the main road
Prefer the slower
Channels of travel
Impaired
But not over the line.
Harvard, Stanford, Cornell
Have run the data
Perhaps a year
Or even two more
With you
To bless or curse
The earth
All for a price
Of moderation.

Bill Grace

Post Sunday Morning Poem

Reading widely and having once lived nationally
I see the name of at least one prominent savant
And far more than the admiral unknown
With his gold braid in the private dining rom
Think of things undone named in the Confession and
Realize it is good I do not subscribe to the death of sin.

Bill Grace

Poster

'Arise go forth and conquer.' - Tennyson

The poster said with young duckling pictured and quoting big T

I can still celebrate that spirit though old

But know that for duckling to grow to duck

Wise eyes must guide to keep brother hawk from lunch.

Bill Grace

Power Discovery

As the black sheep of my family
Perhaps it is no accident
I have this thing for the black cat,
Not that I don't love the gray one,
But it never occurred to me until the black one
For fear of the Satanists
That I had the power to turn off Halloween
For a cause of love.

Bill Grace

Power Phrase

It was Ray Godlewski who taught me the phrase
'The burden of an unlimited potential.'
Four decades later now living in cyber space
I finally realize the truth of his phrase
That was shared on earth so long ago
And grieve the wreckage seen both in my life and in his
From the worship of this idol.

Bill Grace

Prayer At 5: 30 A.M. By Robert E. Whelan Published With Permission

You are the flame, I am wick

Ignite me

You are electric, I am incandescent

Light me

You are the Sun, I am mirror

Reflect in me

You are a brilliant pallet, I am a canvass

Paint on me

You are the latent smile, I the funny

Smile with me.

Bill Grace

Prayer At A Pet Committal

The dirt was mercifully soft
my friend had buried cats before
and knew how to coach.

Pushing the soft earth
over the black bag in the grave
I prayed:

 May the God who gave you
 receive you
 though we do not understand
 we give you back
 trusting in something
 beyond the fever of life
 eternal
 in the stars.

Amen

Bill Grace

Prayer Call

As night turns to gray dawn
I begin to see our lawn
That lawn, prosaic, bourgeois and a common sight
Is the green mask of beauty for deeper things we do not like
Where all would be lost if not for a candle's light
That calls our souls to prayer.

Bill Grace

Prayer Factory

Our house at best a factory of prayer
1 dog,2 cats with which us humans share
the need for communion with The Other
The child in child like ways ecstatic of gain
My wife in her more quiet ways of steepled service
For me the swirls and eddies of it all
West having so much to gain from East
A 'Christ against culture' to use Herr Niehbur's phrase
Still, the spirit can make life sweet
In those moments when home becomes a manufactory of prayer.

Bill Grace

Prayer For Four Hundred

Let us pray - Lord,

We give thanks for the good that is here. We give thanks for our association and for our friendships within it. We give thanks for our freedoms. We give thanks for all of our service people but especially for those who must travel in harm's way and for those who would be with us but could not because they serve in distant lands.

Bless all who are here and all who are here with us in spirit. Grant us journey mercies to our homes, the expectation of future and happy assemblage, and a vision of - and hope and trust in you to help us with the struggles of our pilgrim ways.

For these things we pray in your holy and precious name, Amen.

Bill Grace

Prayer For Peace Defenders Who Must Travel In Harm's Way

May your gun be always in its holster
May your hands be steady in the press
May the wind be always to your back and
May you be in heaven an hour
Before the Devil knows you're gone.

Bill Grace

Prayer Of An Old Chaplain

Thank you Lord I can not name or know
That you have made this vision so
Knaves baptized in the world's success
Flying in the face of all nobleness
Yet somehow you at least for me have made it right
With a process that was well hidden from my sight.

Bill Grace

Prayer Request

To distant Russia from familiar soil we go
To gather child who has already claimed our hearts
And have sufficient faith in prayer
While understanding modern doubt
To seek its power for journey mercies
And all that is to come beyond her native land.

(We are expected to depart on the 10th and return from Moscow on the 22nd at which time the building of this poetic blog will continue.)

Bill Grace

Prayer To A Divine Heart

Still stands thine ancient sacrifice
But I fear we stand not near enough
To truly know reprieve from anxious hurry-scurry days
Filled with such driving need for things and folk
That we forget to listen to our beat and have not woke
Either to the tune that sings
Within our hearts or yours.

Bill Grace

Prayer To A Pillar Of Fire

The television does not talk to me nor you
I turn it off but
You I can not turn off.
You whisper to me in tones
The world will not hear
I listen
I fear
and I pray to you
Great silent and expanding space of the Universe.

Bill Grace

Prayer To An Unorthodox God

Candle light

Morn breaks night

Nature is

Dog, Cat, Child, Wife

Breath and life

Hope for spirit seeing strife.

Bill Grace

Preamble For A Core Values Class Of Military Basics

You have not heard the stories
Of the great war my father's generation fought.

You have not read the local news of valiant heroes
Dead upon far foreign shores
(my mother used to feed the father cookies,
now he has The Medal to remind of flesh and blood
that were his son.)

You do not know war's ordinary deaths,
'Foxy' was not a hero
My memories are of track team bus rides and how quiet he was.

You can not know these things
It is not fair to ask you - but others do -
And so we meet: to share, to learn, to explore, to hallow that history
At whose center Honor is a verb
And Core Values our compass to find it in our times.

Bill Grace

Preface In Prose

Ernest Becker, a name that deserves to be honored, has given us the thought that our lives can be viewed as a denial of death. There is very little that will survive me here that is of importance but the lines that follow are for the most part a celebration of a fierce, beautiful, complicated, and paradoxical world. Joseph Campbell has stated that the world needs more poetry than prose. Hopefully what follows fulfills a little of Campbell's imperative to us. Bill Grace
San Antonio, Texas

Bill Grace

Preface To The Poetry Of W. A. Grace

Perhaps this is my task in life
To filter things that touch a soul
And to hold the strains till a pen can mold
Feeling into form.

Bill Grace

Pre-Lent Meditation On 'Townie'

Listening to the Diane Rhem Show on NPR

I was struck by the author's bloody feet by sneaker incident

My seeing the world to a great extent as a mangled place

Where things frequently take on an energy of their own -

often negative and unintended

It made me think of another with bloody feet

Another buttress to the reality that there is some serious merit

In looking at this Jesus fellow

Once you are in the safety of a harbor of love

Which allows you to raise your eyes and see beyond a flat earth

Observe the ship's sails before the whole is seen

Know the earth is round.

Bill Grace

Preparing For T.V.

On the morning you prepare for T.V.
If post pubescent male
You must shave three times
Each blade finer than the next
Until your skin is as smooth as a baby's ass
And you smile with an equal innocence
All this and you are not guaranteed success
So trust your luck but do not pray
Prayer is for a far more serious moment
Than preparing for T.V.

Bill Grace

Preserving House

This house will stand when I am gone
Quiet statement of another song
Upon our little patch of blue-green in space
With issues of roof, foundation and other matters of care
That so many do not see or will not dare
To help make sure this house will stand.

Bill Grace

President Wanted A Poem That Is In Process Until The * At Its End Is Removed

Where is the intelligence that
Can pierce the armor of issues
So thick they travel to the third plane?

Where is the sacrificial soul so great
It will never allow the madding crowd to lead
Casually towards this terrible thing called war?

Where is character so strong
To resist the sweet lure of words
That tell what we yearn to hear
Rather than what we need to know? *

Bill Grace

Presidential Betrayal - 7

The President knows a betrayer's kiss as piercing as Jesus knew
But despite high office his wound is more,
The measure of God in him being infinitely less,
Lacking divinity's peculiar powers under duress.

Of this new news, at juncture, I have no need to know
And God has worked a subtle magic in this sinner's soul
Rendering a clown almost incapable of judgement.

So like Godiva's townsmen who blunted judgement by loving
Something greater than the temptation of her sensual fare,
I turn my back and grieve the part
Where friendship has become so shallow -
Just a little lump in the national pudding -
Rendered this supposed friend incapable of capacity to swallow.

Bill Grace

Presidential Prophecy-'Addiction' Is A Word Of Too Much Truth

America has it all
Including a dependency on the individual's combustion engine
That even in Bay Area California
I seriously doubt can be broken.

Bill Grace

Pretty Young Blonde At The Shooting Range

With deep ripped jeans and guy she came
Wearing an AAMCO transmission t-shirt
She talked dogs, about the breeds we loved
Some stories of their heroism
Particular animals yet without name
Her fella was there on a mission
She was going into the military in two weeks
He wanted to take a little pressure off
The basic training process
It was a tender thing to see her touch him - lightly
Before they went out
To shoot the first tactical rifle
He had ever acquired
In a trade of a jeep and a gun
For a car,
She got the jeep out of the deal,
I got a poem.

Bill Grace

Price Tags

The young man in court
At the beginning of that long day
Did not know that there were price tags
Attached to his actions.

He thought he was free to act
By enpanellment of the jury
He knew that he was not
And that the price tag
He had failed to turn over
Was twenty to twenty five years
In state prison when convicted.

In my sunset life
I need to learn from this young man
And try to do a better job
Of turning over the price tags
Before I buy.

Bill Grace

Prohibition (**)

The bottled water is no more
Hurricane fears helped lay in a once goodly store
Now we like almost all the town are Aquifer dependent
It's good from foreign water that we are now free
And there will be no more of this fluffy stuff for fee
What comes out our tap with out fear of hurricane
Will have to prove good enough for me.

Bill Grace

Projective Observation At Frequented Restaurant

Hooky from church

Sipping the best orange juice in big town #8

First Baptist on the television

The fast food worker of twenty walks past,

His body posture declares:

I am defeated only as the keeper of the register,

I survive here,

I survive

I

Only I.

Bill Grace

Prose Of The Power Of Poetry - Decalogue Of Pope John Xxiii

1. 'Only for today, I will seek to live the livelong day positively without wishing to solve the problems of my life all at once.
2. Only for today, I will take the greatest care of my appearance: I will dress modestly; I will not raise my voice; I will not claim to improve or to discipline anyone except myself.
3. Only for today, I will be happy in the certainty that I was created to be happy, not only in the other world but also in this one.
4. Only for today, I will devote 10 minutes of my time to some good reading, remembering that just as food is necessary to the life of the body, so good reading is necessary to the life of the soul.
6. Only for today, I will do one good deed and not tell anyone about it.
7. Only for today, I will do at least one thing I do not like doing; and if my feelings are hurt, I will make sure that no one notices.
8. Only for today, I will make a plan for myself: I may not follow it to the letter, but I will make it. And I will be on guard against two evils: hastiness and indecision.
9. Only for today, I will firmly believe, despite appearances, that the good Providence of God cares for me as no one else who exists in this world
10. Only for today, I will have no fears. In particular, I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful and to believe in goodness. Indeed, for 12 hours, I can certainly do what might cause me consternation were I to believe I had to do it all my life.'

With thanks to Walter Hanss for flagging this from the writings of the theologian Ron Rolheiser.

Bill Grace

Prose Of Walt Whitman In Support Of The Poemhunter Vision

'Through the divinity of themselves shall the kosmos and the new breed of poets be interpreters of men and women and of all events and things. They shall find their inspiration in real objects to-day, symptoms of the past and future. They shall arise in America and be responded to from the remainder of the earth.'

Walt Whitman

Bill Grace

Prose Projected For Delivery At Savannah Heights Intermediate - First Words For A Veterans Day Program

One of my happy active duty memories is a meeting with a Marine Corps training officer. Talking about street tough kids in the Corps he told me that these youngsters become "humble puppies." I want to challenge each and everyone of you here to become a "humble puppy" - not in the United States Marine Corps which could be in the future - but here at Savanna Heights Intermediate.

Bill Grace

Protest Over Two Words

The newspaper is clever:

'Who will be the top beagle? '

Is the front page question

The photograph of beagles in competitive queue accompanies.

Charles Schulz gave us 'the head beagle'

Our newspaper 'the top beagle'

There is a difference.

Hitler and Stalin were top beagles.

F.D.R. was a head beagle.

I will take a head beagle over a top beagle

Every day God gives me to protest the difference.

Bill Grace

Puppy's Arrival Theology

The puppy coming in from afar is good theology
With seal broken and water provided
The cats with magi caution approach his crate
Not a sound is made.

The Vet is our next stop
To comply with guarantee requirements.
He sleeps.

A new creature to be loved
Who will with time alert us to the presence
Of others we can not see or sense,
The challenge to make the arrival
Less trauma filled than it was for Jesus.

Bill Grace

Question

If all I have in and of life comes from God
Why should I blame God when it flows from me rather than to me?
Bad - ego - bad, bad!

Bill Grace

Question Of Identity

The stray cat of sleek black coat had with outside time
Degenerated enough to a point of ultimate solution
That three bills later and an overnight vet stay
My credibility was totally shot.
Even the ancient offers of food
Didn't seem to matter much
So great was the betrayal.
Enter "Broken Tail" who is not the same animal as
"Shadow";
Or was it "Shadow"?
I can not be absolutely sure.
There is something about a betrayed cat
Angry with his betrayer once friend
That makes even a broken tail
A matter of questionable identity.

Bill Grace

Question?

How do porcupines make love?
VERY carefully.
Best if we were all porcupines.

Bill Grace

Quiet House

Quiet house

Clock clicks

Dog sighs

Cat snores

Fish sleep

For a while all is well

For a while all is well.

Bill Grace

Quiet House On Christmas Eve

The dog and cats are still
Wife and daughter in bed
The kid with presents on her head
Those things that make us grow
Till wisdom comes and helps us so
We understand the action is not with our toys.
Instead its with our joys
So wife and daughter are the greatest blessings
And after that the cat, and dog and fish
But I only have one wish
That Santa soon would come
And with his work finally done
I can go to bed. Amen.

Bill Grace

Quote For Feb 8,2013

"I think serenity is not something you just find in the world, like a plum tree, holding up its white petals."

poet Mary Oliver
from White Pine

Bill Grace

Quote From A T Hirt

The revelation of love
Is the necessity
For the revolution of peace

Bill Grace

Quote From A T Shirt

The revelation of love
Is the necessity
For the revolution of peace

Bill Grace

Quote From Elizabeth I - 'Golden Speech'

To be a king and wear a crown is a thing more glorious to them that see it than it is pleasant to them that bear it.

Bill Grace

Quote I Like From Facebook

“Whenever life’s got you down and depressed
Just remember
That you were once the fastest sperm cell.”
Iain Craig

Bill Grace

Quote Poem From The Life Of Gandhi

The mother brought the son to Gandhi:

'Tell him to stop eating sugar.'

'Come back in two weeks, ' was the Mahatma's reply.

She came back and Gandhi said:

'Stop eating sugar.'

'Why couldn't you say that two weeks ago? '

'I had to stop eating sugar.'

A case study in integrity.

Bill Grace

Ralph Lauren's Revelation

The clerks
were well aware
that the label
was purple.

Being country
I was ill informed
but have had
pretty good radar.

It was the shirt
that held me:
100% cashmere
long sleeve
functioning epaulets

earth tone plaid
purple intimation
not enough
to demand attention.

In this puritan's universe
a crack
elegance – perfection - beauty
I was a virgin no more.

I had missed it,
unlike my undergraduate roommate,
I never knew
it was there -
one more thing
to prick a horse
from walk
to canter.

Bill Grace

Reading Fairy Tales

Reading fairy tales to daughter
Has helped remind me in a friendly way
Of the world's complexities and that pride
Of which I am most culpable
Is the greatest sin
And that love that does not seek to fill a hole in self
Does indeed give warmth and light
In a dark and cold world
Redeeming far more
Than even the best artist's imagination can conjure.

Bill Grace

Recipe For An Advanced Ale Lover

Charmay is nice

But, oh! the price.

A fine ale when in Belgium.

In the States we must make due and ask:

Did brewing in Abita Springs survive The Storm?

Their brand called 'Turbo Dog' is very nice

And a fraction of the other's price.

Bill Grace

Red

My mother was a red
The Great Elizabeth was one too,
Observing our young kitten
Engage her older friend with claws - when she has none -
Makes me wonder,
If there is more to red than color.

Bill Grace

Reducing Texas

When I left Texas
for active duty in California
I drove hard for an entire day
and
could not leave the state.

In a unit of our union
so vast and so diverse
I confess the violence
of such a poem
that seeks a word
appropriate and accurate to home.

If Texas
is strong
Reason
reduced to one word
would be
the capacity of her people
for
WORK.

Bill Grace

Reentry

In a fairly good restaurant
The decision is made
The coffee is poured
And black is back!

Bill Grace

Reflection Of A Marauding Priest Without Faculties

The friend who spoke of mission
Was not the one who placed the candles
At the foot of the cross where the work was done
But it was others less priviledged or less fortunate
who did the real work
Lacking both the vocabulary and circumstances of escape.

Bill Grace

Reflection On Age And Preparedness In Celebrating 500 Successful Submissions To

As five hundred comes
I realize a little better who I am.
By some in days past seen as mad man,
My insurance year's capers were particularly bold
This seems so long ago and now I'm old.
I thank God I've been given these years to live
Yet still try to be prepared if the other fellow's
Only means of communicating is with a shiv.

Bill Grace

Reflection On An Ancient Book Of Elizabeth Barrett Browning

To me her greater works are a source of comfort
There being so much there that strikes as pale
Her great love poem to John standing as a singular monument
It gives vastly lessor lights the hope
That there may come a day
To strike the spark of poet fire.

Bill Grace

Reflection On An Archive

In the attic of the gym
Snooping in my youth was not a sin
I found there a fund raising program
From the Great City in a time beyond my own -
Frankling Delano Roosevelt Honorary Chairman.

Mother was an archivist
Wife worked at that too
Surely my pack rat ways must count
For some thing as a clue
To show how the past
Will always act as prologue.

Bill Grace

Reflection On Painting A Church

The day has come and stolen by
Cat sleeps peacefully by my side
Riveted to couch by bright light
I will soon join bride in bed.

Paint brush to church a common sight
Bespeaks the failure that is our plight
The able bodied who are not here.

Can prayer save Mary a noble question?
Yes, Lord - I believe!
Help thou my unbelief.

Bill Grace

Reflection On Sir And Saint Thomas More

Once upon a time
I believe it was at the Met
Hobbes's Cromwell and More
Were staring across at each other
Through at least that eternity.

More was the martyr
Though it took the church 500 years to fess up
Cromwell carried Henry's axe
And twenty years back from 2006
The tour guide was nonplussed at my desire
To visit an unmarked English traitor's grave.

Why such a sense of strangeness?
When despite a continuing conspiracy of silence
muffled by unrepentent or unknowing bureaucracy
The location of this loyal servant's body is at least known
When his far greater master's grave is lost.

Bill Grace

Refraction Off An Interview With Wendy Whelan (Charlie Rose Show)

Madame, in Moscow we saw
The Bolshoi perform Giselle.
But Charley's cut of your work
Helped me to understand your husband's comment
That on stage and armed you are not
Back stage or even breakfast companion.

Proportion has been a gift
Compared to the beauty of your movement's grace
That defies this small thing called gravity
And makes this pen salute both your vision and your power.

*Wendy Whelan is the principal dancer of the New York City Ballet.

Bill Grace

Refraction Off Charlie Rose Pandemic Interviews

Looking down the barrel of this dark gun
The experts careful not to be alarmist
But agreed we must prepare for that which will come
Not as spectator sport
Perhaps a decade of preperation grace
Perhaps vastly less
The strike of iron through a sea of hearts
It does not matter when this evil comes
It comes and
We must strengthn our levees
To have any hope of dignity
With which to greet it.

Bill Grace

Refraction Off Kenneth Patchen's: 'The Deer And The Snake' As An Angry Sunday Stone

In my church I am one of the quiet radicals.
One of the three guys who helps make the food run
So the senior women can feed the poor -
No medal there, the poor distract us from our true theologies:
The things that distract from death, or wealth or power
Or countless images on countless screens
I can not count the ways.

Or how about trying to convince
Little old ladies to wear T shirts
To tell the world about our little patch of church?
Or being so strange to think
That that divorcee/teacher
Who loves the church as well as its children
Who serves my family and its family well
Who lives on the edge of financial oblivion
Might just be Jesus
Patching up our crumbling walls.

Only our Lord's body died
Faith has it even his spirit
Occasionally can be found alive and well -
Sometimes, even in a church.

Bill Grace

Remagen Bridge

It is the image that incites the need to travel
Why else would a nonexistent bridge impel a visit?
And a thousand other places
Anticipated with the mind of history
Whose sight is but a fraction of their experience.

Bill Grace

Remembering John Andrade

The bank of flags and red and white stripped coffin
are electric to our sight
Despite our most profound enemy being our need for drama
I am glad our local paper keeps the pressure on.
We must not be stupid or calloused about their lives
Grief of the greatest magnitude is in order at their passing.
Too many have not been mourned.
Too much lost of what the blessing of their lives
Would have quietly meant even to those
Who never quietly touched their hands.

Bill Grace

Remembering Lincoln's Assassination Day With A Hat Tip To Robert Emmet Whelan

When Booth pulled off his caper
killed Lincoln with his fiery blast
he could not have hurt
the South more
set the madness of gallows
in motion
deflected grief from its
more proper course
Lincoln's death was the final period
from throwing off King George's yoke,
which took another fiery blast.

Bill Grace

Remembering Uncle Don In A Stream Of Consciousnessr

The day Uncle Don played host to Eleanor Roosevelt was a good day
The day Uncle Don realized all his achievements - vanity - a bad day
Between these two extremes we all live.

This does not negate other wisdom available to us

Nor ease the bite of death's approach

Gandhi tells us we must be the change we would see in the world.

Bill Grace

Remembrance Of A Fraction Of Our Days - Raymond Edward Godlewski R.I.P.

With the orders to Germany I knew that it was over
He would not stay in touch despite my grasping almost begging
The teaching years, the insurance years, the Quaker years, the chaplaincy years;

I guess it was just too much change to track.
Or perhaps because on active duty a sergeant - captain thing
It really doesn't matter when you love someone.
He could have helped me fail promotion
With so much less pain
So much less loneliness and anger.
We could have laughed at my pretentious ambitions
We could have told stories of our failures with women
Or memories of our parents
Or a thousand other things that build the great intangible that binds.
Now none of this matters
He was almost dead two years
When I learned he was gone.

Bill Grace

Reminder Of A Great Truth On A 4th Of July Holiday

This 4th the trash men did not work
The world of recycle stopped.
Perhaps it has always been this way.
I approve a world where trash men get their holiday.
Jesus has given us the essential clue
It is the sacrificial that moves things
A cause, a society, a life, an army
A program, a marriage, two buildings of empire, trash
Jesus has taught us well
It is the sacrificial that moves.

Bill Grace

Repentance

Of my many sins - some much more obvious than others -
The ones for which I repent most are those of pride and fear
Ambition once burning bright and carried like a spear
Damage was done and not to me alone
So with years has come the understanding if any good in me there be
It's from the energy that would atone.

Bill Grace

Requies

Cold outside

Hidden in a warm house

Quiet

Flannel pajamas with which to greet shiver sheets

Dog and cats peacefully settled

The day energy quickly flowing from me

Memories of the day and friends

quickly fade

Blessed rest of peace that quietly forms

Blue edged parameters around the coming day.

Bill Grace

Requiescat In Pace - Valentine

Cruising around the World Wide Web
Checking on who was stealing poetry
On the Russian site I noticed on the side column
'The Sea'
A strange event to break a grief open and prompt a poem.

I regret I did not go to Bob Nally and commission a portrait of the sea
When I had the money from being quite prepared to help blow up the world.
There is some art that makes you ache with its reality.
Bobby was a Gloucester boy he knew the sea
His Father took my Dad to the gallery where an enormous canvas hung that he
had done
Though I was very young still I swear that despite the air conditioned comfort
I could taste the ocean from the oils on that canvas
Feel its setting sun upon my skin.
It is a sin I did not act.

The Monet is of 'La Pie' a giant poster from the Louvre gift shop
It rests on the mantle over our humble fire place in land locked Texas
It is nice but it does not breathe of salt air, or a screaming seagull ghost,
And a world whose terrors my father escaped and I never knew - the sea
Probably a nice place to visit
Yet this wound is still to heal along with such other cowardice
As not humbly asking a girl named Sandy to marry me
All this - back when dinosaurs walked upon the earth.

Bill Grace

Reset

Jesus came to give us
more abundant life,
and a little more freedom
from life's strife.

Saul of Tarsus
ever the company man
took Jesus
and gave us church.
Blessings
upon them both.

Yahoo
taking pictorial liberty
showed us
Earth
from Mars.
Jesus took
his power from the stars
Saint Paul from Mars.

For myself
I like the stars
that give me hope
of reset at death's door
despite
the startling depth
of noble Paul's erudition.

At death
the reset comes
and Emperor
and Rabbi
have equal hope
of more
for no one truly knows
what lies
beyond
this door
or if knowledge

can even be the keeper
of such a score.

Bill Grace

Resurrected Response To A Writer's Prompt Celebrating Nelson Mandela

NELSON!

You trouble maker!

My muse heard rumors

you are living next to

Martin Luther King,

down the street from

Gandhi,

and Jesus has been elected mayor.

Bill Grace

Resurrection Is A Singular Thing

Resurrection is a singular thing
Resurrection is a singular thing
it blinds us to hills that skip
and fields that sing
God dwells in the human
it is true
but nature's settings
are a diamond
which also helps
see us through.
Diamond and gold
both make the ring
to this
a poet sings.

Jesus was so special
God could not abide him dead
when good Mary went to find him
found an angel in his stead.
The story's very stirring
the story sure is true
with a truth that will last for ages
Good News for me and you.

There is so much light to Jesus
we are blinded by the sight
could easily forget
God's others of great height.
Isaiah talks of stone less
Highway through riven sea,
oaks of righteousness,
whirlwind, vineyard, desert, mountain, moon.
Hills that jump as lambs
God's power in the sand.

Jesus is the man!
for me it will always be.
However, I am also grateful to Isaiah
who provides a lower voltage

that also provides
some additional hope for me.

When it comes to cosmic pay off
paths, valleys, hills, trees and seas
these hold to a status where
I also find divinity.

God gave his power to Jesus
Isaiah also was connected in
I hope that both their spirits
will help keep me
from my deeper sins.

Bill Grace

Retreat With No Conversion

Herb tells me the story
Which I believe is not a tale
Of a journey to the court house
Intercepted by a fellow with a big and drawn knife
'Give me your wallet! ' says the bad guy
Little Herb did draw his gun
Remarkable how fast it made that big guy run.

Bill Grace

Return From Beaver Hollow

The return was good but not perfect
These words for those who will someday bury me
It is ok this thing of visiting snow country
And the scene of murders never quite forgotten
Even the cemetery that holds my parents
Was a scene of white peace
From which I could laugh at past ambitions and follies
But the campus now gone to neon proclamation
The place did not hold closure though little changed
It was cat and dog, house sitter and sister
Who helped close the wound just enough
That I could tell the doctor where it hurt.

Bill Grace

Reverie On Yellow Paper

If the great and intricate machine of government fails
The the great land of buy-buiy-buy will be no more
The pawns are in the stores
Backed by knights and bishops
The castle rules the street
A quenn here a king there
A blind poet writing to a friend
With hope that at least God
Will understand these lines
That he does not.

Bill Grace

Richard Serra Thank You

Richard Serra thank you
For two nights with you on Charlie Rose
Tonight I will sleep better for this TV
Because I think you helped me see
The quest is to strive but also it's ok just to be
Truth requires neither that I buy or sell
And just may be the worthy thing that endures.

Bill Grace

Rifle At The Gate

The guard at the gate
had his black rifle slung
across his chest, I commented as
I showed I.D. -
he said nothing.
Wear showed it was not recent issue.
It fires 700 to 950 rounds a minute
minus reload time for changing magazines.

In thirty five years
around the organization
I have seen this
only once before state side.

It was on a military base in California
to let the gang boys know
if they planned to storm the base hospital
to off the opposition
in protective custody
they had a fight on their hands.

Bill Grace

Right Off The Vat

The voice at the other end of the drive through coaches me
How to satisfy my addiction
For fresh french fries that are supremely hot
You say: 'Right off the vat.'
This was education superior to the observation of fast food labors.
The greater surprise came at the window
When asked: Would you like salt?
For the first time in fifty years of fries
I had an option in that nanosecond of confusion
That blessed an old life with this young man's question
And my opportunity for a fledgling no.

Bill Grace

Rilke's Dictum

These marks of meaning
Must strike to paper as I breathe
When there are no fresh lines here
You know I'm gone
Or the other death has claimed me.

Bill Grace

Roadside Cross In Texas

In South Texas it is not uncommon
To see the memorials the highway has claimed
Not that the victims may not have been on some errant quest for fame
The issue is not blame but memory
A strange thing to consider.

This morning on a cross I passed
They placed a small picture of her face
It made me stop and realize
A scene transformed from every day
Suddenly I understood the fearful loss
That previously placed memorials along my way
And does it still day by day.

Bill Grace

Robert Bellah's Wisdom

The prophet lead us truly that day
And helped us see with painful clarity
That Homer and Socrates were far from dead,
That to be the center of the universe serves no one well,
A centered pot belly asking hard questions
A far better thing to be.
Plato burned his plays because of him.

It was the only time I ever saw
A class stand and applaud.
We knew we had a model
To help understand a vast malaise
If we could find the courage
To face the hemlock lingering in our own cups.

Bill Grace

Robert Whelan's Rules For The Pilgrimage

1. Religion is too important to be taken seriously. Religion should be fun.
2. You cannot define your faith by denigrating some other faith.
3. Christianity was built on Judaism. At least 60% is the same.
4. Jesus was always a Jew. God's promises to the Jews never changed.
5. Theology is talk about God. No absolutes. Be wary of absolutists, iconoclasts. No dogma. Self proclaimed prophets should stay in a cave.

Bill Grace

Roughed Up In Berkeley

I have only been assaulted once
My life's not through it may come again
It is an experience not to be sought.
He was an artist I was a student
Japanese this artist with all their fabled intensity
I stole a minute perhaps no more than three
In his restricted parking lot before he reached me
Was roughed up a little
The cops were wisely dismissive
And I wisely never tried to steal
Another three minutes from his parking lot.

Bill Grace

Ruth Simpson Remembered

The call comes and informs of death
It is not the first time
The great democrat has visited
A century of life insured the invitation.

Still, I am numb
The trailer is not the same with out her
The world has a more hollow ring
A comic raven helps.

We huddle together – food and laughter and drink help
The phone calls and cards help
The teasing and celebration of memories help
Even the silence seems to heal
There is no need for words.

A life of great fullness closed
A love too full for sound or fury
This is what we have known
So we grieve and heal
As Ruth would want us to.

Bill Grace

S. Truett Cathy - A Memoriam Poem

Long before I knew
of the man
I knew his work.
Impressed but not convenient
our separate lives pressed on.

A strange sort of man
he took this God thing seriously
knew money was not
the center of his universe
even before the years
of age teach this lesson,
even before
the gods of the market place
would come to deep fruition.

He is great now.
You can not escape him
gone from view
but not from influence
united
with a God
we can only barely presume
the most bare fraction
to ever hope to understand.

I wish him well
this stange man
I never met.
99

Bill Grace

S. Truett Cathy - In Memory

Long before I knew
of the man
I knew his work.
Impressed but not convenient
our separate lives pressed on.

A strange sort of man
he took this God thing seriously
knew money was not
the center of his universe -
even before the years
of age teach this lesson,
even before
the gods of the market place
would come to deep fruition.

He is great now.
You cannot escape him
gone from view
but not from influence
united
with a God
we can only barely presume
the most bare fraction
to even hope to understand.

I wish him well
this stange man
I never met.

Bill Grace

Sacred Om Ii

When the sacred om is lost
the market endures
a simple
painful
truth

Bill Grace

Saint Paul And The Emperor

Even as emperor I do not understand

It is all too crazy!

Something about eating the flesh of one who lives

A God come to earth I can handle

but what about those civil disturbance reports?

The man starts fires.

That's it I'll start a fire, burn Rome and blame the Christians.

I better kill Paul

So no one will know where I got the idea.

Bill Grace

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Bill Grace

Salute To A Corpus Christi Doctor - Gordon Conwell Smith, M.D. Deceased

Corpus Christi - no switching station - a quiet town
Was an opposite leap from the Berkley years,
And the good doctor known there had a reputation
In the professional association as the only physican
Who would treat the poor. The phrase was: 'has an interest in.'

Someplace I suspect I have the silver dollar he gave me
With solid guidance about always having money
Which he had but had the wisdom not to worship.

A follower of Baghwan Rajneesh
His care for those of lessor furtune
Make suspect christian colleagues
In the stained glass encampments
That live just slightly beyond the country club.
This all helps 'corpus christi' to be a nice alliteration
For the host of us not reading latin
And long gone from the wonder
Of a warm breeze sailing town.

Bill Grace

Salute To George Catlett Marshall On The Charlie Rose Show

The general wore two stars in that high hierarchy of four

'Who was our greatest General? '

'General Marshall.....'

Nice to see a salute to the man unknown by so many

Whose picture lives in my study and more in my need for a hero.

Bill Grace

Salute To Ron Rash's "the Exchange" In Vastly Less Dynamic Scenario

The beautiful
country blonde
in the Burger King
in deep South Texas
did not get
to speak
as duty whisked
her by
the gull winged doors
of some fast food
crisis
but
our eyes met
in strange
communication
that especially
this poor poet
can not
translate
into form
on a sleepless morn.

Bill Grace

Salvation's Other Face

In early morning's fog there names appear
The souls too wise to love a lessor God than love
Who passing that great energy to me
Saved me from frightful fires of eternity
Not a far off Hell but on this planet here
And redeemed a soul in present time
Just as Jesus did, who was also kind.

Bill Grace

Sarah Teasdale In Retrospect

'Life has loveliness to sell...'

I wonder what Sarah would say

About the situation today

Where stores are the place so many worship?

Bill Grace

Savants

I listen to the savants on Charlie Rose
Am grateful for those who would dissent
These worlds that spurn
Acknowledgement of sin as real.
So often and sadly the things that truly make us run
Are our need to put hamburg on the table.

Bill Grace

Scat Cat

The kitten does not understand
The shards of glass are not for kitten paws
And reprimand for oft sought food.
So we too are often guided by a higher power
That steers us from the desired corner
That would only cut our feet.

Bill Grace

Scratch Off Heaven

The discarded scratch offs
Told of another chance at heaven lost.
One thought - perhaps they were purchased
By a commercial realty tycoon -
This is the way it should work
Those having wealth gaining their 'more.'
No, the tycoon will be on the golf links
Or perhaps even in church seeking his heaven.
Six dollars in scratch offs helping to guarantee
The tycoon will stay rich and buttressing my Mother's wisdom
Heaven is won one hard step forward at a time.

Bill Grace

Sea World 4th Of July*

This 4th the French may not be popular
This nation that helped to sanctify the 4th
Yet our crowd feels their influence
In sound and sight spectacular
Where even sea creatures do the bidding to delight.

If those rough hewn men could see their seed
With two centuries plus of growth
They too would respond with even greater shock and awe
Than we of television times.

Bill Grace

Selected Aphorisms From The Writings Of Robert E. Whelan Published With Permission

33. Follow the money.

36. More education in theology does not lead to more faith.

37. Everyone has to run the same race in their own style.

38. In any church, you have different types of people. There are the priestly, the prophetic, the poetic and the working people. The first are concerned with keeping the church as it is, the second are concerned with the current needs of the people, the third find God in artistic pursuits, and the last pay the bills.

39. Prayer is not what you do with your alone time it is what you do with the presence of the God.

40. Everything important in religion is indefinable.

42. There have always been some critical questions to be asked:

What do you come seeking?

Who is Jesus to you?

How do you define truth?

43. Beware of formula sermons.

44. In religion as in the military and sporting events, people get carried away.

45. Beware of the 'true believers.' Religion is too complex without nuance and humor.

Bill Grace

Setting The Stage To Review 'God's Not Dead' Part I

I have not seen the movie "God's Not Dead" but I have seen the four trailers for it provided by . Those of us close to the academic community have experienced the hubris depicted by the professor and from what I can tell, with only trailer contact, he will provide the film with an adequate bad guy. As an individual who has devoted most of my life to this area – I was ordained at the First Unitarian Church of Ithaca, New York thirty four years ago – a few additional thoughts.

God, and I find this word disquieting, does not need our defense outside the realms of process theology where the power of God is defined as the power that the worship of the divine inspires. Rev. Jeremy Taylor at a Pendle Hill dream seminar recently shared a definition of God from the Hindu tradition as that which has been unstained by words. The picture of earth taken from Mars as discovered on Yahoo has reinforced the beauty of what Taylor shared with us. This is also not too far from the thought of rabbi Abraham Heschel who finds "awe" the appropriate place from which to start on a quest for The Ultimate. As Jake Emperor, S.J. has stated: "humanism without God is poor humanism." God does not need me but I need God. I declare this with great respect even with an Aunt Eleanor who found religion a sham but was too gracious in her life to ever use that word. She died peacefully at an advanced age and had no use for religion. I declare my faith to a world that has found my life a laugh so why should I be surprised that it finds a deep reverence for the totally other also a laugh? For me God is real but not a reality to compete with the powers of science. A first rate treatment of this is presented by Huston Smith's 'The Way Things Are' published by U.C. Berkeley Press.

I am going to see this film and continue my attempt to review it here but trust me the divine is not dead.

Bill Grace

Settled Down

When things settle down
I always seem to drift towards poetry.
The tock of clock calls to me
Money and its problems are still there
Career and position are still there
The tasks of family are still there
Poetry always calls when things settle down.

Bill Grace

Seven Gifts From Our New Poet Laureate

Sir, it is not just your love of fine old trees
Or sharing the deep shards of truth's light
Your honesty about fear of money's power for instance
Your willingness to give your life away
A relationship of fifteen years that culminates in classic love
It is your assertion that poetry is not dead,
And the comfort that neither are you.

Bill Grace

Shadow

The shadow is that which comes
When flesh stands before the sun
Discovers a cast of darkness not near so real
As when a recipient from others of their evil it feels.

Bill Grace

Shadow Side Walking

With the thermometer at 80
At 9: 00 the Texas sun still casts
Shadows on our street
That help with walking.

How I admire – even envy –
The half my age neighbor
Who two gorgeous children later
Sheds their high wheeled stroller
Runs with such intensity
She is covered in sweat,
Much like my secret love Susan
Running in early morning
In see through mesh
Through the center of the seminary's quad
Defying all expectation,
So Christina
Her shirt framing her neck
Much like an old fashioned horse collar
Bathed totally in sweat
The champion who was
The champion who is
Both champions
Bathed in their sweat
Of a secret battle.

Bill Grace

Shayari A Third Attempt

In death I join the paupers and the kings
and a million other things
That can not tell us where they truly are
So profound is silence.
I wonder why I dread it so
Perhaps it is God's way to show
That we were never truly here
Hence there is so little that we need to fear.

Bill Grace

Sick In Moscow

How strange to be so sick in Moscow
That even the call of Czarist treasures
And the great icon hall was stilled.

Bill Grace

Sighting From Distant Age

Perhaps it is the primal currents we pass on
My father's rage at my youthful antic of wageing war upon the stray cat
Now more mildly surfaces with daughter's lack of care for pet.
Dad understood the little guy's battle for survival be it man or creature.

More loved by others than loved by son
At last I understand that memorial window
Given for him that lives beyond his death.

Bill Grace

Sign In Lubbock

Lubbock has a fifties feel

Texas Tech's gracious-spacious campus

Is quite real.

This stoolies third visit prompts a need to quote

The small sign on entering our smoking allowed hotel:

'The City of Lubbock health board has determined

That second hand smoke is unsafe.'

Bill Grace

Signature

An attempt to leave a little mark
sure proof of not being so very smart
gratitude for the sojourn here
as long as pain's restricted
to the present sphere
and does not become more great
before transition to God
through the other gate.

Bill Grace

Silence As Elixir

Wife and daughter do not love my late night ways
When silence draws me as a magnet
From the day's harried lanes
And house with them securely in it
Helps also shield from terrors
That often prove too great a force in solitude
And kill the strikes of black ink
Upon their white paper victim.

Bill Grace

Silence Is Ok

Here I am most real
The world can not understand
The silence from which lines grow
The silence from which Christ drew
And Mother Theresa too
Many will some day come to understand
That silence is ok
A blessing worthy of its count and cost.

Bill Grace

Simple Pleasures

Simple pleasures for me are these:

A well balanced pen with smooth flowing ink,
Eighty pound paper, smooth finished, black line spaced (no anemic blue) , full
length tri and multi punched,
Hot dogs at 'Betty and Roy's, '
Fresh squeezed orange juice at 'Cha Cho's, '
Cold beer at night after a too full day,
A headline that brings good news,
A sermon that grants a laugh,
A three hour lap swim knowing you can push yet more,
The outside pool you do not have to clean to use,
Daughter's kiss unbidden – wife taking hand,
Learning Nietzsche is pronounced Neetcha,
Learning of the steel of Nelson Mandela's self discipline for good,
Our flag full furled by constant breeze,
Bargain at a garage sale,
Morning coffee and early morning bird song,
Black leather shoes shined to a mirror finish,
Watching cat plays,
Reading early Frost,
Publishing these lines.

Bill Grace

Simple Pleasures II

Warm wind to your back
Puppies at play
Cat on her back
Broccoli with ranch dressing
Cookies and milk
Laptops clicking in the living room.

Bill Grace

Simple Truth

When things go wrong
We can not seem to grasp
The simple truth that what we love
Is what will endure.

Bill Grace

Sin Is

Sin is out of fashion perhaps out of even more
than I have simple words to name:

Honest introspection revealing much
Society not schooled in ways of silence and meditation,

Wilson sailing to Europe
Leaving key Senate leadership behind
To fester and take his precious treaty from him,

O-rings that killed our astronauts -
Nobody investigated pandering to journalists.

Sin is real even if we do not like it
From a macro view - not being a betting man -
I will bet on its power every day,
The greatest tragedy being
It is only a Hitler who seems able to share it
Most of us bearing its isolation and other pains quite alone.

Bill Grace

Six Obsessions

The first obsession was a toy rifle
The second a.22
Jeanie Uhl and Chess in fifth grade
Mother with her death approaching
And a secret catalog of women
Achievement
Six bricks sans mortar
In the wall of a life.

Bill Grace

Six Shadows And Hope

We would do well to meet our shadow
The side we give so little publicity,
The side from which the media run like dogs
Yet revel in like wolves tearing at a carcass.

We would do well to own our darkness
A Black, An Indian, A Jew, A Criminal, A King, A Messiah
For others to use to focus as targets for our rage
If we could only meet our darkness and have help to embrace it
There might be basis for hope of something
That was once called progress.

Bill Grace

Slice

Slice

In moments of doubt I ask;
What if we are a book with out author?
It does not change the stars or ocean
The mountains of fierce peak will still stand
The wind will still blow, the dog chew on his toy
The cat recline in territorial splendor,
Electrodes in my little brain will fire
These words to sensate splendor.
Left over noodles for lunch.
One friend with back surgery in the early morning hours
Another friend who has lost his mother
Suddenly the sufferings of Jesus
With God only as a hope - is enough.

Bill Grace

Small Hand In Mine

This little hand that touches mine
Has brought me to a world greater than a legion's ears
And freedom more than 40,000 feet that grants the vision of the Mother's arc,
'What are you doing? ' she asks
Pointing to this long furtive affair with words.

I wish our men of steel
Could taste this nectar of a child's love
But too often their great power to observe
Blocks the embrace of experience
For if they could feel
Then powers' cruel propensities
Might prove a little less.

Bill Grace

Smiling Buddha`s Of The Buck

The smiling manequins black and white and yellow
Young and younger gods of the new order
With appropriate teeth welcome wife and daughter
To a kingdom as close to heaven as any similing Buddha guards
Whose souls mark the silent swish of carpet.

Bill Grace

Snow Day In South Texas

With the cat nestled in my lap
The fish requires feeding
Memories of this day conclude:
Dishes washed to Flaure`
Daughter's snow battles with a next door sister
Lengthy nap for wife and self
The dentist's thoughtful call of weather cancelation
A minor fight with wife, three dog walks
The fun of finding just the right note book
colorful and inexpensive at Target
Three telephone calls to friends
One perfect Valentine's day card for a favored niece
One storage unit run
The Christmas tree almost dismantled
Not a bad catalogue
Of one snow day in South Texas.

Bill Grace

Social Security

Before the doors open at 9: 00
Before the security guard tells you
Your calls must be made outside
The line is waiting.

Sitting in the great waiting room
I am 'Blue 3.'
It will determine when I am seen.
The representative is pleasant, he is young,
he is not officious. I feel welcome.
Still, even at its best, suddenly you realize you are a body.
You realize you are more frail than you ever thought you would be.
The postponement that proved a blessing.

Bill Grace

Socialist Underwear

The mostly whites and occasional tans
Of some exotic and far away mass production plan
Carried the great benefit in those years of less
Of helping to keep me out of financial stress.

A world of plaids and single colors bright
I did not know
As God helped direct my little show
Through things as strange as cancer wards
And work with children of destitution's child.

If underwear had been priority
I think my parents would have helped,
To correct the plight
Of this non-aesthetic sight
But I lacked the wisdom alas to ask
And there were greater things for which to strive.

Now the years have brought a more aesthetic state
Than that built on whites and tans
In no small measure luck and trust and love
Have worked their strange chemistry
That presently makes socialist white much less of a necessity.

Bill Grace

Solstice Sunday Celebration

Braved against sun's denied light
Solstice celebrations come to sight
Herald of that which is so deep within
Transcending a history of darkest sin
Hope for a future and perhaps even glory.

Bill Grace

Some Little Thing To Say

Some little thing to say
A piece of the day observed
Or was it perhaps something heard
There's always room to play
When looking for some little thing to say.

Bill Grace

Something Worked - 4

I can not tell you how but something worked
Like Norman Mailer with his cancer and Marx Brothers movies
Inducing laughter in the face of cancerous death and winning
I can not tell you how but something worked.

Our guide whose grandfather Stalin murdered
Told us it went extremely well
(I know nothing of Russian judicial practice -
The judge struck as one who took great care -
For me the process took forever)
My wife took the point of the judge's questions
And I emotionally followed.

Safe in Marriott Moscow
A good rate negotiated by our guide
To stem the dollar hemorrhage
Steadied by strong European coffee
She whispers and I transcribe.

Yelena is not free
But the mud soaked streets of a distant peasant village
No longer claim the future of her life.
I say this with respect of the people who stopped
More than any other Hitler's madness
And lived with Stalin's savageries.
There will be deep wounds for her to give to God to heal
Or whatever is her greater power than self.
And my prayer is that an alphabet
Will not hinder her return to her heritage land
Perhaps she can help carry the water
To our mutually parched understandings.

Mother would be pleased with our vote
Who invested profoundly in the number two.
And as I said at start, something worked.
If you gave a thought or prayer to help
A humble thank you for this, for something worked.

Sometimes Something Fragile Is Lost

When something fragile is lost
You don't know how to count the cost
You just know that it is gone
That others can not even hope to sing your song
That the tune was meant for one
Will never have successor or son
Sometimes something simply fragile is lost.

Bill Grace

Sophrosyne

When Mother Theresa was asked to join an anti-war protest
She declined she said 'I am not against things I am for things.'
We learn the word hubris early in our careers.
We are against this pride that has destroyed so much.
Can we take a lesson from the good Mother?
Do not be lazy. Research this title. You must be the one to
fortify your mind. Beware those who want to do it for you.
This work may just provide a critical provision for your journey.

Bill Grace

Spark

You were flint I was steel
Perhaps it was the other way around
Or did I just play the clown?
At distance it is hard to say.
We felt the spark and knew its danger
Wiser than we were in youth
When passion coursed within our veins
At velocities triumphant for all the world to know.
It is lightning's power – thunder – rain
That keeps us staid upon our tracks
Fearing what pours upon our roofs
In the darkest night.

Bill Grace

Speck On A Bowl

The speck on the bowl
Tells the imperfection of the whole
Cries in its isolation to be removed
Just a speck on a bowl but how it drives me crazy!

Bill Grace

Sphen's Worthless Degree

According to the Yahoo article
Horticulture is the third most useless degree
Sphen spent his life making the school grounds beautiful
Gave my first course in aesthetics without a word
He needed six beers a night to do it
No one ever said, certainly not Jesus,
That making the world more beautiful would be easy.

Bill Grace

Spring Ahead

A formula for day light savings
That seemed to help
(with a nudge from Uncle Sam)
Was at four the afternoon before
To set the watch at five
And mentally subtract,
Which works well enough
For production of early morning poetry.

This thing of thinking forward
Holds great difficulty for us
In matters far more heavy
Than the management of time.

And in moments of deeper pondering
I wonder if our common weal wandering
Might prove less if we all could
Set that compass on our wrist
Ahead an hour or even two
BEFORE the alarm clock rings.

Bill Grace

Spring Break Observation II

While little E and big L visit
The butterfly garden, I write.
The roof keeps me safe from sun
As I await them for an ice cream respite.
The hyper activity of a day
Playing tourist in our own back yard.
I study the young on spring break
But envy only a few - they young lovers -
Who gently touch each others hand.
As I silently wonder if they have built
The necessary foundation to make their tenderness last
Against the storms that are sure to come.

Bill Grace

Spurs Shirt On

In HEB

That great Mecca for us all

A black T-shirt read:

“KEEP CALM

AND GET

YOUR

SILVER

AND

BLACK

ON”

I bought it.

Between bites of yogurt

Wrote these lines

That count for little

In the great city

But yet

Count for something

A molecule working

(Perhaps molecule is too grandiose)

An atom working

To help the hope

Of victory

For all.

Bill Grace

Stale Shell

The story line was there
but the phrase of fire was lost
Stolen by a day of:
Too little poetry
Too much detail
And demands not met at cost.

Bill Grace

Stalin's Rolex

Berlin was Stalin's Rolex

Its price was 352,000 Russian casualties

He bought it and never counted the cost.

The symbols of the great are many

A Peace Prize, a capital, a market, an election, a car

The central thrusts of our broken humanity.

Bill Grace

Stance

In the early morning with bare light to function
Upon the manicured grass
I spread my legs in careful stance
And in one full swoop of expertise
Retrieve the dog's poop in an act
That does wonders for the maintenance of neighborly relations.

Bill Grace

Start Up*

With wife gone and morning's gray turned light
I love the time before the energy of passion comes
When a black chimney can burn into blueing sky
 The time before the second cup of coffee
 The time before checking the weather on the web
 or the New York Times or research that seems to take so much
The time when siren wails are the exception
When cat draws near and dog will think about it.

The time before public dressing,
When street lights cast dog leash and hooded jilaba
And a vastly over size corgi, into the moving shadow of:
'Death Walking His Dog' - a photograph yet to print.

Bill Grace

Steve Stalonas Remembered

In the stable with plenty to eat
The restlessness that denies sleep is shared with a picture that
Given forty minutes of mid day laps,
Makes no sense except for the old Quaker's wisdom,
That God's ways grind exceedingly fine.
That the picture of the slightly bald chaplain
In the pool with the handsome black lad
Was taken before the lad became a Master Sergeant
(Which is not an insignificant rank given the world of media generals)
Was taken before Al Qaeda was a house hold word
Was taken when they - AQ - were doing their home work.
It's amazing what you can learn if you live and if you take the time to talk
To the Pakistani security guards guarding the compound
The vehicle having contained explosive but not carrying explosive
This time before another time called Khobar Towers or OPM-SANG.
And if you remember the words of a professional pacifist
Who would go to prison rather than wear a uniform
Who haunts me with his wisdom after Nixon and Clinton
That God's ways grind slow but exceedingly fine.
God's ways grind slow but exceedingly fine.

Bill Grace

Still, Small Voice Of Calm

Our primordial selves twist skeins
That Twain and Tolstoy have clearly shown to us
That even together we are not so pretty.

Why then the bankruptcy of the Holy?
When astronauts tell of celestial conversions
This seeing of things from afar may be a secret
To unlock a greater power than rocket engines
We have come to trust.

This small voice that whispers in the dark
Comfort of martyrs and guide of saints
That greater deep from which Jesus drew -
A subtle thing - that split his era into two,
A subtle thing this still small voice of calm.

Bill Grace

Stop Sign

Almost all stop
But no body loves it.

Bill Grace

Strange Sign

When Leon Panetta gets negatively in the news
For too many tax payer trips home
I congratulate him
Not for bringing down Osama Bin Laden,
Though I appreciate this work,
But for Washington being less of a home
Than where he came from,
Too many in positions of high power forgetting
Their true roots
Leaving that strength
That can conquer Washington's myriad forms of terrorists
Behind.

Bill Grace

Strange Silence Fills The House

A strange silence fills the house
one less cat to kill a mouse
still I grieve
for cat and mouse are one
beyond this pale together
they live with the Eternal Son.

Bill Grace

Strange Silence Fills The House II

A strange silence fills the house
one less cat to kill a mouse
still I grieve
for cat and mouse are one
beyond this pale together
they live with the Eternal Son.

Bill Grace

Studying Romans

The loud child
does not know
that she is loud
supported by a father's love.

Neighbors graciously allow
our dog his use of their lawns
to take care of business.
Dog does not understand
the offense that he can give.

Studying Romans
with the help of the good pastor
I too like child and dog
fail to understand
my offending nature.

Yet grace
that has seen me far
I trust may yet abound
and with hope, yet
will see me through.

Bill Grace

Suburban Halcyon

Soft air to caress
An orb peels gray
Hedge greens that radiate
Stone mirrors light
Not bee or bug bite
Suburban halcyon.

Bill Grace

Suffrage At Poem Hunter

The world must have the right to vote
A reader's exclamation taught me this with his note
So vote as default I will now allow
Or change back to correct the error of my ways.

The world it seems has need to judge
My living in it has come to see this as so much fudge
And Rilke, from his letters, I believe would find this suspect.
But despite my poverty I want to offer a small tithe here
To pay a debt owed towards healing of this sphere.

So hindrance of a reader's right to vote
Will be corrected at my next stroke
And reader judgements that have been read before
Spiritual homework will be attempted so they do not canker like a sore
My task in focus is only to write and give them more.

Bill Grace

Suicide Tsunami

From public school my wife reminds me of the suicide
She left four children and a husband
A poet saddened who never met her
A poet who remembering very little
Still remembers the first sight of water withdrawing
Reports that at least one child was blinded by the blast
Forgive the editorial this is not a matter of class
If anything those with more
Seem to have a higher score
I don't know about the husband
BUT FOUR CHILDREN
This poor soul just pointed
The Houston nurse thing in the other direction.

Bill Grace

Super Bowl Reprise

My friend who watched the game told me
It was the half second differential that turned the tide
A lesson worthy for all who must compete.
Not only are our destinies shaped
By the fractions of our points
But even time's fractions must be honored
If domination - or even simply survival - is your goal.

Bill Grace

Sympathy For Survivors Of A Pakistani Mass Murder Of Children

The man in the locker room told me of their murders

'It is beyond evil.' he said.

Dave Franks a great preacher and good chaplain
at another time of sadness said:

'What an animal'

I can only sadly echo here:

'What an animal'

and shake my head in sadness
while trying to remember where
I have put my gun.

Bill Grace

Take Her With You

In the silence of the night
if you do not have a lover
take a poet with you
Elizabeth Bishop if you need a short corpus
Emily Dickinson if you need a long one.
Guy or gal good or poor it doesn't matter
for the silence of dark nights
take a poet with you.

Bill Grace

Tale Of A Once Upon A Time Christmas Gift For Me From The Deity

God has a sense of humor and
If you have time I have a tale.
In military basic training land
The youngsters - not always young - always come to chapel.
It is the only place where they are free
Loosed temporarily from the fetters of their captivity
It is a place of pressure and of pain
This military basic training lane
Access to the military the goal to be gained.
The process lasts about twelve weeks
Twelve being the number chosen by our greatest teacher.

On Christmas Eve with help from wife
Her intent being to help ease my preaching strife
A great sermon was spoken to the uniformed throng
Their attentiveness told me absolutely nothing was wrong
A great sermon preached to a sea of faces
A little less pain in one of God's strange places.

But the best was yet to be
For God's sense of humor held a gift for me
That in that night of greatest pastoral power
A goal of rich adolescent vision had come to flower.
The goal was to preach in a great filled cathedral
And to do it with an excellence almost sudoral
To do it so well that half would return
To do it so well only half Christ would spurn,
At least as far as his worship would go
The ethical part is still very much in tow.

So God may or may not have a plan
But I suspect She chuckles when She observes man
And although cold stone the structure was not
A legion it could comfortably hold
The half of which were almost down right told
By circumstances beyond their personal control
That to chapel next week they would return

If only for encouragement their first strip to earn.

This is a genuine gift God gave to me
The purpose I think to help me see
That though youthful ambition errs by aiming high
The calculus of our lives belong to the Big Guy.

Note on the use of 'She' to refer to God. It was Oswald Chambers' 'My Utmost for His Highest' that educated me to this in the scriptural sense.

Bill Grace

Tap And Push

The age of tap has come
The age of push has gone
In feeble doggerel
I'll celebrate the push swan song.

Bill Grace

Teen Self Hatred And "13 Reasons"

National Public Radio
informs of the most major health threat
to our teens - suicide.
As one who loaded a gun once
in adolescent peak
I am interested.

Ray Godlewski
a college house mate
pre-cellphone, pre-dinosaur
gave me a clue when he spoke
"of the burden of an unlimited potential."
before I surmise what was
his own untimely demise.

As children we are not taught
the nation does not celebrate
that we are not rockets
with the resources of a nation
aimed at the moon.
You cannot fail to launch
if you are not fueled.

No easy response here.

We are hardened to what Jesus calls us
to learn in this area of despair
perhaps someday we can understand
suicide is not an option
to the misery of a planet.

Bill Grace

Teeter-Totter

A torn up lawn's a little thing
Especially whose greens I do not own
For private lawns may dwell in peace
Where urgent trucks make equal quest.

But given human nature and its ways
I doubt without some touch beyond
(to unbalance finite difference)
The thing will ever work at all
To allow the necessary balance
For those who'd like to play.

Bill Grace

Television Survival Drama

We all know about 'Survivor' and the other reality shows.
Ken Burns and his crew gave us another one,
A sort of ultimate reality show
Whose prize was the survival of World War II.

Bill Grace

Temptation To Murder

My daughter at thirteen
A temptation to murder
But for remembrance of antics
And attitude when of the same age.

Bill Grace

Testimony - One Day Late

To those that once proclaimed God's death
I will give you my testimony
That God will get your attention
Even if it takes a Texas sized hurricane
Even a thing infinitely less tangible
Even believing you are prepared for death itself
Is not an adequate defence
To deny His claim.

Bill Grace

Texan's Advent Reflection

With dog and gun, uniform and Bible
I'm not the ideal man
He came to us long ago
Folks then didn't find him so
So let us be careful how we judge.

Bill Grace

Thank You Marianne And Mr. Jeffers

It is very nice
to receive a gift
from those who supposedly
are dead.
So,
for Marianne Moore
and especially Robinson Jeffers
a public thank you
for letting your views be known
that poetry does not always
have to be composed in meter.
"Rolling stresses"
(as Jeffers put it)
are sometimes adequate
to get
the poem out.

Bill Grace

Thank You Note

If you said a prayer
Or even tossed a thought of blessing
Out our way while we were gone
To Russia to retrieve the child we had
So quickly grown to love, thank you.
This modern world that thinks it knows so much
In truth knows very little
And even peasant movements
Carry subtleties almost incapable of understanding.
So... - thank you.

Bill Grace

Thank You To An Anonymous Bureaucrat

The license came
I wondered if the strange request
Had been honored
To port over to it
The picture on the driver's license
From the madman on the original.
The note
Requesting the change
Had been honored,
God requiring maximum anxiety
on this particular envelope.

So with out benefit of so much as initials
I will say thank you
To an anonymous bureaucrat
Who helped me get
What I wanted
And didn't charge
For the effort.

The issue is not Santa Claus
Or even the providence of The Divine
But I had to say thank you -
If only in this vacume here
If only to exercise -
The two most powerful
Words I own
'Thank you'
As you never know
When a good picture
Can come in handy.

Bill Grace

Thank You To Theodore White

Theodore

I know not where you dwell today
But suspect these words betray
Your death was not your end
Your having the wisdom and kindness to send
Something of yourself beyond your time
I lacked full appreciation of your gift sublime
So full then of youth and lust and passions less tamed
In my years of descending trajectory
At last I have the wisdom
To celebrate and to salute your fame.

Bill Grace

The \$ Rules The World

The dollar rules the world
This I have suspected from a youth
Though with age have had it painfully confirmed
And out of guardedness to touch reality
Am always sure to check its trail.
The problem with the dollar being not with a dollar
But with a noun that also has its plural.

Bill Grace

The 800 Pound Gorilla Question In Education

In exploring a little of the worlds of Gibbon and Freeman last night
I think Al Evans (my old civics teacher) would be pleased to know
His only so-so student had persevered
And helped to write a little history
At Camp Rissington before it came to San Antonio.

My great teachers ignited a hunger
Far more than force feeding me to pass New York's tests.
The first issue in educational process
Is far more than asking good teachers to split their vision
Between a mandatory standard and what they truly want to teach.
In looking at the calculus of education we frequently ignore
The eight hundred pound gorilla question in education:
Does the student want to learn?

Bill Grace

The Amendment Of One Comic On Our Deaths

I believe it was Grady Nutt who said - loosely quoted:

'You look back on the edge of death and say

With a hearty laugh - I'm glad I did that.'

At my exit I wonder if the best question could be

Did I enjoy as much as possible

The struggle of my stride across the stage?

.

Bill Grace

The Army Of Commerce

The girl at the door of Wendy's
Nicely tells me at 0800
They do not open until 9
I am watching
The new Wal-Mart being built.

"5 State Helicopter"
Has joined the war
Moving huge concrete bath tubs
Half the size
Of a Normandy pill box
To the inside
Of prefabricated walls
Of the coming temple.

The men all in orange shirts
Form a fire team
Each must signal
That his chain is secure
Before the monster
Can take up the slack.

"5 State" is a powerful machine
Its rotor stirs
My black coffee into waves
Orchestrate a de ja vu.

That strange pulsing sound
Of egg beaters
More powerful than gravity
And I am on the ground again
Protected from the same sun
By a Wendy's umbrella
Viet Nam remembered
But not experienced.

Bill Grace

The Carried Hat

Of all that I have read and heard of J.F.K. and Father
The most intriguing story for me concerns
A hat the President carried for a week after his inauguration
The owner of the factory that made it being a Kennedy backer
The hat the first carried 'thank you' note I know of in history
That validates - even in the world of Presidents -
The power of those two words.

Bill Grace

The Chocolate And Vanilla Of Courage

There is the courage of the body of which I have read
or heard the stories of the elders of my tribe
Roy Benavidez spitting in the medics face
to communicate he was alive - half dead.
John Levitow passed out on the ramp of Spooky 71.
Dave Carter giving a kidney to help a co-worker live.
William Graves refusing medical aid.
'Four Chaplains' who I will only meet in heaven.
Yet, on my quiet porch the other courage haunts me.
Steve Stalonas refusing my brainless adulation.
Henry Nixon calling the bigotry of his superiors.
In history George Marshall wisking away a President's favor
at risk to self.
With age I know very little but I am certain that
Courage comes in at least two flavors
Both are ice cream.

Bill Grace

The Color Of Grief Is Moist

Fatigue, deep pain in her voice
Negotiation of the details
The death, cost of services,
acknowledgement of griefs
Moist eyes of the first meeting
Moist eyes of the funeral service
The strange sheen of moisture that claims a face.

After the struggle to celebrate and bury
The woman of majestic jaw in the box
Deformed hands so deftly covered.
After the struggle to get the morning garbage out
But before first coffee
Before the pills I need to function
It strikes me in the twilight of sleep
How beautiful she is

This woman of broken voice and spirit.
Moist with the wake of one loved and taken
Moist with how final it all can be.

Bill Grace

The Comfort Of Pillows

If the world gives you a pillow - Beware!
If a pillow is built for you be humble
The devil has laid a snare to catch you
If your pride escapes
Your body is almost guaranteed capture.

Bill Grace

The Creativity Of Ashes

My daughter informs
She will put my ashes with the Statue of Liberty
Her mother does not concur
The discussion is of consequences
I am not consulted
A portion for Corpus Christi Bay – a statement
A portion for Willow Glen to be with mom and dad
A portion of me ever with the troops
The creativity of ashes.
The creativity of ashes.

My daughter informs
She will put my ashes with the Statue of Liberty
Her mother does not concur
The discussion is of consequences
I am not consulted
A portion for Corpus Christi Bay – a statement
A portion for Willow Glen to be with mom and dad
A portion of me ever with the troops
The creativity of ashes.

Bill Grace

The Creativity Of Ashes II

My daughter informs
She will put my ashes with the Statue of Liberty
Her mother does not concur
The discussion is of consequences
I am not consulted
A portion for Corpus Christi Bay – a statement
A portion for Willow Glen to be with mom and dad
A portion of me ever with the troops
The creativity of ashes.

Bill Grace

The Curse Of Poetry

To carry the fire of poetry in your veins is curse
Because the freedom to say 'no' is lost
You write because you have no other choice
Hope that God will read a word or two
Or some other respected or unknown entity on the web,
and that you will be very lucky,
If strangers bless you with a kind word in your cup.

Bill Grace

The Daily Doggerel - A Shard Of Sidewalk Glass

A shard of glass
Sidewalk found,
Not on the black velvet of
Jeweler's drape
Thing of beauty,
Wrested from another plane
Often in action's shame
Small portion of the main
Which we seldom see -
The nature of common store -
Till broken and
Released,
Shard of simple silver fire
of sidewalk glass.

Bill Grace

The Daily Doggerel - Age

When Gabby Hayes is more than name,
When clean public rest rooms are not academic
When honor over victory is no longer the province of party
When you see the miracle of movement of every limb
When this list is growing.

Bill Grace

The Daily Doggerel - Age At Sixty-Six

When Gabby Hayes is more than name,
When clean public rest rooms are not academic
When honor over victory is no longer the province of party
When this list is growing.

Bill Grace

The Daily Doggerel - Churchill's Cigar Corgi

The dog
With the roll
Of pig's treat in its mouth
Was so absurd
It was funny.
Churchill reincarnated
As a Corgi puppy!
With a ridiculous object
Hanging out of its mouth -
But no blitz -
To help smooth the public's reaction
To eccentricities,
That helped the man's fame.

Bill Grace

The Daily Doggerel - Jesus And Hierarchy

The Japanese understand us better
Than we ourselves
Hence
The Lexus automobile
A dressed up Toyota
That helps convince us
We are better than Jesus
Who did not qualify
For a Gold Card.

Bill Grace

The Daily Doggerel - On A Class Mate's Distant Suicide

I learned years after it happened
This this distant name had killed himself.
It was Ken who told me
What had happened,
Robert Leslie taught
It takes so much desperation
For this event.
The words of Jesus came:
"Forgive them they know not
What they do."
I was Y he was M or N
We knew each other
But we didn't know.
In a roadside break down situation
If there had been recognition
We would have stopped to help.
It makes me sad to think
With well less than one hundred
We didn't know a thing about each other,
Only a name.
There was so much busyness
So many other trajectories
Even in rural upstate new york
Not too far from Cornell's libraries
Where I did almost all my papers.

Bill Grace

The Daily Doggerel - Pretty, Young Blonde At The Shooting Range

With her deep ripped jeans and guy she came
Wearing an AAMCO transmission t-shirt
She talked dogs, about the breeds we loved
Stories of their heroism - a little
Particular animals yet without name
Her boy friend was there on a mission
She was going into the military in two weeks
He wanted to take a little pressure off the Basic
Training process
It was a tender thing to see her touch him - lightly
Before they went out
To shoot the first tactical rifle
He had ever acquired
In a trade of a jeep and a gun for a car,
Where she got the jeep out of the deal.

Bill Grace

The Daily Doggerel - Six Lines On A Growling Puppy

The puppy protests he is wrapped around a tree
Constraint of leash the reason he is not free
But growl he will and carry on with me
As he only understands it is I who move
But it is the power of the leash
He does not see.

Bill Grace

The Daily Doggerel - To Helen A Poem Of Appreciation

With the yapping Corgi puppy walked
Daughter safely an Oklahoma Indian reservation
Wife heating up hot shower pipes
I can at last do
What even my ailing body has denied
Write.

So to you dear Saint Helen
Patron saint of a poet out of favor
May the Great Other bless you
For your reading eyes of extant work
Friendship
Tea
Offering to pick up the tab at lunch
Education on food
Wise medical counsel
Use of your first rate lap pool
For all these blessings bestowed
Here where we struggle
Thank You.

Bill Grace

The Death Of Happy Birthday

I would never have guessed its' death
A friend mentioning the demise at dinner
Suddenly the inane sounds in restaurants
Make great sense with blinders off
And as is almost always the case
Registers are involved to a not so happy jingle.

Bill Grace

The Death Of Our Corgi – Sandy

He did not want to die
Two vets, the loss of his back legs, the growing ulcer,
His inability to join us in the family living area,
After almost ten months of heroics
That final week of dramatic decline
Told us it was definitely time.

I cried like a broken child, my wife cried too
When you love it is hard to say good bye
We loved him and he loved us
So strong his grasp it took twice the protocol to send him off.

He suffers no more
The cats do not live in terror of his temper
I will guarantee the integrity of his ashes
But this second evening he is gone
I still have this funny ache inside
A taste of grief within my mouth
There is great quiet in the house.

Perhaps my rationale side is wrong
Perhaps I can love another as much as I loved this dog
Perhaps John's Gospel definition is true
Perhaps in love there is a God
That even for a dog will never end
Towards this God this poem I send.

Bill Grace

The Death Of The Female Cardinal

The cat did not understand
Our revulsion at her trophy
That the victim had a personality
As fully developed as the huntress
Only the bird lacked a name.

I knew by intuition's power
There would be an unwanted cost
To the kitty's here again - gone again meanderings.
A cat must be either in or out
So when she would come home wounded
I would obsess over her.

It was the ever growing magnitude
Of the goriness of her trophies that stirred
A primal fear within me of song bird corpses
That magnified death's sovereignty.

The kitty will kill again
I will grieve her prowess
And the fact that frequent food
Has not slacked the sharpness of her claws.
The hunter and the hunted
A cycle to be repeated
Long after these words are gone.

Bill Grace

The Death Of Wes Herd

From half a continent away
The confirming call comes
That my old friend's great friend is gone.

The grief is not well hidden
In that voice I know so well
Deer hunting and time will prove therapeutic
For me it was a story:

With his death on Thursday on Tuesday
A blue grass band came to wish Wes well
He got out of his bed and played the spoons.

Blue Grass and love
An alliance more powerful
Than even the spectre of death.

Bill Grace

The Decision

The mother holding her child at counter height
Side steps in perfect rhythm
Reviewing thirty one ice cream flavors
Telling that sometimes the decision
Is the greater reward.

Bill Grace

The Dowager's Question And Bequest

After the first husband
The second she dearly loved
Great wealth and even a modicum of fame
Could not protect her from death's democracy
"Where do they go? "
She asked on the sunlit veranda.
A liberal seminary does not prepare for this question
Life does
Even twenty five years after the question
"They go even more deeply into our hearts because
we do not take their presence for granted."
So at last I have answered her question
Closed the debt
To the lady who more than any other
Helped discover this poet's voice.

Bill Grace

The Edge Of Theology

A: God invented the things I like.

B: Do you like green beans?

A: Yes, but only in cans.

Bill Grace

The Fortune Cookies' Fate

When carrying a fortune cookie
With high hopes to take it from A to Z or A to B
If you do not want it crushed
Remember to plan for a stiff box.

Bill Grace

The Function Of Religion

The function of religion
Is to save us from ourselves.

Bill Grace

The Future Theolog's First Blink From Sleep

It was an English publication - 1932,
In the States a rough equivalent of 'Better Homes and Gardens'
But there was one strange twist as
It sang of one glorious enough to be:
'The savior of Western Christain civilizatiion
against the Bolshevik menace.'
Adolf Hitler
Not a bad introduction to the world of sin.

Bill Grace

The Gain Of An Entire Life Lived

As one who took thirty years
To move from contemporary to classic Haiku
I have come to appreciate Jean Cluett's wisdom
That the first chapbook did not hold great poetry.
It is ok to be small even almost invisible
This can be the gain of even an entire life lived.

Bill Grace

The Gate Guard's Gift

It is my custom
to say to military folk
‘Thank you
for your service’
knowing that service
can be harsh
in a hard world.

This morning
at the gate
a return gift
waited for verbal ritual.

The soldier said:
‘Thank you
for helping me
be here.’

It hit home,
in the counseling business
we would call it
a ‘reframe.’

An old chaplain
a young airman
an eternal bond.

Bill Grace

The Girl At The Gate

The girl at the gate saluted
How this old man wishes
That she had winked.

Bill Grace

The God Whisperers

We have the horse whisperer,
We have the dog whisperer,
But what about the God whisperers?
The legion of legions who listen
When a small voice gently lures:
Here, take this as my new direction.

Bill Grace

The Great God Pill

Oh great god pill
How youth in my psyche yet resents your power
To send this not so ancient frame to hell
If so foolish not to remember the consequence
Of going AWOL from your pills.

Bill Grace

The Gulf

With wife not with me
Strong willed and beautiful
Having known me as customer a long time
Intimacy enough to earn a playful scorn
We both paused and took each other in - if only for a moment
Looked across that vast gulf of age, income, education,
Our shade of skin
And realized the gulf that divided us was vastly more
Than a counter at McDonalds.

Bill Grace

The Hallowing Of History

History teaches that we are not so great
That our moment rests on frail things
The darkness of the present being well hid
It is the past that truly gives us light
And helps us understand with deeper sight
The contemporary things that touch our days
Enough to make a cynic religious
Or better yet call one to balance
In The Middle Way.

Bill Grace

The Hardness Of Lines

The stray cats teach me
About the hardness of my lines
About being out of control
About compassion for God's creatures
and what they suffer
These lines whisper about unspoken fear of not having enough
Returning to years of want protected only by dreams
It is a mystery this thing of making it through
We all want the Edsel's certainties
Forgetting Napoleon once manned a canon himself
On that long road to Saint Helena.

Bill Grace

The 'I And Thou' Of Poetry

Reading John Henry Newman's 'Beyond the Veil'
Reassures me of the 'I and Thou' of poetry.
Just as Elizabeth Browning celebrates
Her 'long lost saints' it helps greatly
If once you had them,
To appreciate what was lost -
To appreciate what the poet means.

The phrase 'I and Thou' is a famous one from the work of Martin Buber.

Bill Grace

The Institution Of Toast

The institution of toast
Is not well understood
It being a common thing
In a world obsessed with novelty.
Like the divine we would do well to make
The periphery of its acquaintance
When properly tamed by toaster
A pleasant thing for dog and man alike
A bread worthy of its begging.

Bill Grace

The Journal

It does not not lie
It tells with a sigh
Not where you are
Or where you want to be
But where you were and when
According to Katherine Lee Bates
A line a day is enough to keep from sin.

Bill Grace

The Kindness Of Class Mates

I remember the class mates
Who did not make fun
Of a natural target
Who had yet to learn
The art of camouflage
The art of blending into the herd.

Bill Crowe did not make fun
nor did he encourage
those who would slay
a peer for the entertainment
of seeing invisible blood flow.
Pete Waldron and a student senate helped me win.

My forgotten undergraduate professor said
The adult version of this well
Reflecting on days in the big time he commented:
'There are those who would kill you
Just to keep their claws sharp.'
It is something I remember to this day.

Bill Grace

The Last Bullet

At the league meet when Coach handed me the last bullet
I knew I was regarded as lower than whale shit
Having run his system for three seasons and never placed
There was nothing to lose - walking off was not an option
So I let the herd thin out
Then in the last lap poured in everything I had
A fourth place has never been so sweet
A fourth place loser whose surprised coach
Taught a lesson that would serve a life time.

Bill Grace

The Limits Of Therapy

As many recovering alcoholics know
Beyond the madness or sanity of those who formed us
Beyond sex, death, love, peace and a 1,000 matters of circumstance
After much work there comes a point of discovery - the hole -
The restless heart about which Saint Augustine
Jung and so many others would direct us
A hole which only God or something only of soul can fill.

Bill Grace

The Man On The Cross

I knew him first in pewter and porcelain and plastic
Before I knew him
It was an "Acts" retreat strangely enough
Not the future bishop who was a colleague,
Not Robert Bellah at CAL -

(Princeton made a great mistake
In not giving him Einstein's seat
It would have been like having Isaiah on campus
Or at least his spirit,)

No, it was a group of men -
Forgive the chauvinism there were no gals -
Baptized by love and brutal honesty
Who worked and worked and worked and worked,
Someone had to pull that little red cart
With the sound system on it.

It has been three weeks and only now I write,
Almost every day I write and sometimes even publish.
But tonight I write – still in shock
And leave my apology
To that man on the cross
Something about gravity and steel
And running out of paper.

Bill Grace

The Man Who Filled A Valley With Music

Over the bed of the man who filled the valley with music
hung the pewter corpse mounted on brown wood
'INRI' in scroll over the top of His head
he certainly looked dead.

Across the public highway our neighbor the front steps of his walk
where Eleanor Roosevelt and entourage would first stop
when she would come to briefly visit.

To the front of the house of the man who would fill a valley with music
a far rolling eastward hill with a fox den of young welps
enjoyed through telescope. Unposted land
the fox destiny
a future hunter's
victims.

Up the highway from the neighbor of the man
who would fill the valley with music
the chapel
set in expansive lawns and flower beds,
the man would gather empty beer cans on his way to Mass
tidying this public's indifference.

How do you fill a valley with music without convening a rock concert?
in those post World War II days scrap was cheap
he befriended the State's war surplus barons
he befriended the scrap merchant
when metal was low he melted ingots
when scrap was high he sold
the money bought a carillon
the carillon made music
music that filled a valley
the man who filled the valley with music
my Dad - 'Pop.'

To the front of the house of the man who would fill a valley with music

Bill Grace

The Man Who Filled A Valley With Music Iii

Over the bed of the man who filled the valley with music
hung the pewter corpse mounted on brown wood
"INRI" in scroll over the top of His head
he certainly looked dead.

Across the public highway our neighbor the front steps of his walk
where Eleanor Roosevelt and entourage would first stop
when she would come to briefly visit.

To the front of the house of the man who would fill a valley with music
a far rolling eastward hill with a fox den of young welps
enjoyed through telescope. Unposted land
the fox destiny
a future hunter's
victims.

Up the highway from the neighbor of the man
who would fill the valley with music
the chapel
set in expansive lawns and flower beds,
the man would gather empty beer cans on his way to Mass
tidying this public's indifference.

How do you fill a valley with music without convening a Woodstock?
in those days scrap was cheap
he befriended the State's scrap barons
he befriended the local scrap dealer
when scrap was low he melted ingots
when scrap was high he sold
the money bought a carillon
the carillon made music
music that filled a valley
the man who filled the valley with music
my Dad - "Pop."

Bill Grace

The Man Who Loved Music

In the early adult years every Saturday
He would listen to opera

Then came rock and roll
Which he would defend
Before it became accepted

There was the evening
His daughter sang 'Ave Maria'
Did it well for him and
Everyone else in the church

Eventually there was the carolyn
That filled the valley with music
Which he purchased with a slush fund
Built by melting scrap in the back yard
Not a bad record for a man who never wrote a note.

Bill Grace

The Mission Of Poets

The world breathes forth poetry every day
Our mission to capture what will not stay
Contrive with words in such a way
That event becomes the reader's experience.

Bill Grace

The Monsignor's Wisdom

He quoted at least once an English play write -
I think it may have been Paul Harris
'That people are not against you they are for themselves'
He shared that one year he sent over 300 Christmas cards
Every one was glad to have a piece of him.

In his apartment he kept a multi frame photograph
A navy pilot who missed his carrier and crashed
Only the 'Mr.' in its caption is remembered.

Joe never traded too much on this monsignor thing
But he was proud of the honor and understood it
Proud of full colonel in the Navy Reserve
But he was still disturbed in later years of success
He didn't make the active duty cut.

I wonder if the photograph of the young pilot's plane is any clue?

Bill Grace

The Morning After Moscow

Loving friends to greet you
And send you into early morning revelry
Familiarity of things from milk to chocolate
And the greetings of the dog and cats
In ways a Grande Salon
Does not accomodate.

But of all the things that struck
In coming back
The most surpiring thing
Concerned a hat.

A hat far too heavy for South Texas wear
Though a wonder for the snows of Moscow
Where not a lick of notice did it once receive
But - 15 is not 54
Though shock of travel did not call its name.

Bill Grace

The Most Beautiful Line Of Prose I Know Of In English Translated From German And Recounted By Myself

Herman Hesse has given us these words from his book 'Sidhartha' which is his interpretation of the life of the Budha:

'His peaceful downward hanging hand; sought nothing, imitated nothing bespoke an invulnerable peace.' This is recounted from memory but I will make an effort to check it. Translator and publisher are not remembered.

Bill Grace

The Most Serious Question

The most cowardly thing was not in uniform but years before
When loveing Sandy Nieman and not understanding that I loved her
I asked her to marry me without putting weight on the fearful question
Much as the injured might put their weight on a crutch to spare a foot
I guarded feelings and used jest as crutch
For fear she would say yes or no or perhaps maybe
To the most serious question of my life.

Bill Grace

The Mug

The mug contains a pen
And each pen in it a story
A story of acquisition, value, maintenance,
memories, surface things recalled and things
As buried and ancient as where the gold came from
Through which rust now peaks.
This celebrating mug
Now plays quiver
To vectors of a soul.

Bill Grace

The New Orthopraxy

In the new orthodoxy
God is not dead but ideas are endangered.
Stuff is what it's all about.
Salvation does not lie in things
This is the contemporary heresy and
Only a few are concerned.

Bill Grace

The Newspaper Girl's Success

Our newspaper delivery folk have come and gone
But mostly gone so I have taken note of one
Who seems to stay.

Late this morning
She sweeps into our street
Driving against what would be
The normal flow of traffic
With papers for every subscribing drive way.

Exiting she does not see
The dog, the stop sign or me.
Beyond one day's manic concentration
She is a south paw success story
That tells - in part - the secret of a greater success.

Bill Grace

The Nostalgia Of Taste

King's Hawaiian bread, Baskin Robins chocolate, bacon properly fried
These contain the memories of youth
Better than the trophies of a spring hunt
Better than a triumph cheer at winning
Better than a first girl friend's convenience
A truth in taste of truly good things time has not diminished.

Bill Grace

The Old Chaplain's Hair Policy

Retired, I will never grow long hair
It is the least that I can do
To show those who wear the uniform
That there are ties that bind
Beyond hierarchy or position
Or the fate of those who fall
There are ties that bind
That keep one spirit ever in your line.

Bill Grace

The Old Robe

The forty year robe needs to be relined
An unexpected - unceremonious - gift of a mother's love
Today a three bill item not easily understood in youth
Mom bought it from Evon for the price of materials
(Evon's husband finding it of excessive warmth)
My mother knew well her sons cold blooded way
That could use a robe of triple warmth but could not stay
What was to prove destiny's sure migration South to warmer days
Beyond the warmth of nurturing nest and a mother's love
not even death could hold.

Bill Grace

The Pastor's Influence

My standard jest
had been for many years:
" ... if the Psalms were
good enough for Jesus
then they are good enough for me."

In Sunday school
Pastor taught us
Deuteronomy
was His greatest influence.

We are made less cute by insight.
How dearly we love sacrifice
from which we benefit.

History's spot light
may well be drawn
to that we love,
but what we love
may well be
far from truth
especially truth
that sets the moral compass
to true North.

Bill Grace

The Pastors Of Our Time

We who are the pastors of our time
Can only hope to heal the smallest fraction
Can not resist the avalanche of smooth talkers and soft thinkers
But must stand aside or be crushed
Us for whom sin in so real
Our own and that of others
Ultimately trusting even our own brokenness
To the One who most can heal our world.

Bill Grace

The Poet In Market Culture*

As most of the poets basically give for free
She-he's never taken seriously
But let some poet succeed with the buck
You'd think they had acted egregiously.

Bill Grace

The Poetry Game

There are moments when the well goes dry
And despite the fiercer pumps that I will try
No water comes - it is a shame
But perhaps it's all part
Of the poetry game.

Bill Grace

The Power Of A God Called 'Buy'

Still, I tremble before the power
Of a God called - 'Buy! '
And wonder at my terror
These very many years
The many things that separate from silence
If silence be the channel
To where God dwells I can not tell
But still I tremble when I buy.

Bill Grace

The Preacher

The preacher celebrates Lincoln's great strength
The camera pans to a beautiful black woman
Not very much engaged nor I.
The same instinct I had of Nixon before Watergate,
Something is not right.
This preacher has powerful words
But he could not keep his day care center open
It did not turn a prophet.

Bill Grace

The President's Arrows

With stiff decorum we see them opening doors
Or lowering ramps and frequently saluting
They remind me with their perfect posture
Of arrows from my youth straight and perfect in the quiver
That makes me think how much better at The White House
Than notched in some warrior's bow.

Bill Grace

The Reason I Write

One reason I write is it carries me away
Where so much of life is sullen
Perhaps these words will stay
Not so much a matter of memorial as remembrance
When God grants the beauty
That is vision and respite from the fray.

Bill Grace

The Sadness Of Justice

I was prepared to give my life
To insure his regime would not grow stronger
A tyrant of the first magnitude
Who loved nothing that I love
It was sad to learn his death
Was an occasion for circus and baiting
The prisoner more powerful than those who killed him.
This scene so far from the vision of law
For which so many have hoped and sacrificed
and sometimes even prayed.
I fear.
I fear, when seeds of evil are sown.

Bill Grace

The Saga Of Robert Gates

He came to Charlie's table
When Charlie came to his predecessor's office.
Forty years of service to eight Presidents,
If this data is correct I have not checked,
The Press has discovered Bob Gates.

Mr. Gates wisely understands the press 'worm can turn.'
Although I find 'the power of the press' a more apt phrase
As I too join the Bob Gates craze
But perhaps out of a different motivation than those
Who must file stories to please editors and ultimately readers.

This is an instinct call out here in cyberland
A peasant looking at The Grand
I swear I saw pain in Gates manicured frame
Though just beneath the surface as appropriate for a holder of great office.

The question was why there was so much attention all of a sudden.
The unspoken answer is that he has always been the same
It is we who have changed and after forty years see
A wise man to help guide us through turbulent waters.
I sip my coffee from the cup with the Great Seal
It is worth a little more this morning.

Bill Grace

The Seed Of A Good Thought

John XXIII wisely suggested to us
That we spend ten minutes a day with a good book
If a Pope can find the time
To search for the seed of a good thought
It seems reasonable to me
To suspend my drives towards little pope
To follow his example at least for ten minutes a day.

Bill Grace

The Siege - A First Memory Of Robert C. Leslie

His book's title on the subject sounded right
The letter written in the East
To the professor living in the West
'Permission of instructor required'
Even the siege of his office had failed
The good professor was popular
The class was full
There was a long waiting list
It was not the first time I had been licked.

So graciously withdrawing from my siege
Signed up for something a little less
That still kept me in the great man's light
Second day of class a little shoulder tap
'... I want you to be in my class...'
Thus began true tutelage of the professor
Who would claim me more than any other.

Now I am old and he is gone
Yet I, still strangely driven to make song
This strange thing that brought me to him
There is something to our fate,
The world I fear may mock,
But I believe and trust and will not debate.

Bill Grace

The Sink

The sink will not wash the dishes in it
So I must.

Bill Grace

The Stars Give Course To Blood And Bone

The stars give course to blood and bone
Which in our nature we think is home
Yet in this science there is more
For despite our suffering we are not alone.

The cross for post moderns a place of ancient gore
Can not compete with almost any store
That God exists or cares to many almost a certain folly
Our vision all prescribed by our wanting more.

I wish that I could claim I'm free
Nor held by a sense of history
With so much in it that is grizzly
It is no wonder that I fear
No wonder that I tremble
At news I read.

Bill Grace

The Storm Bed Three

In the good orphanage far from her present land
She slept in the great room with eleven others
And was protected by soup far more than the hamburg
Which is her present delight.

After the storm of the day where she learned again
That she can have much but can not have it all
Came the storm of nature's night
With terror adequate for a child of nine
My wife granting sanctuary in our bed.
In morning daughter informs I was snoring
But I only remember small cold feet upon my skin
And foggy gratitude to what ever that force in the Universe may be
That this of all evenings was not a night for sleeping in the buff.

Bill Grace

The Surgeon General's Prophet

By age eight my favorite brand was Viceroy
The third time Dad caught me smoking
This man of few words was moved to poetic intensity
"Bill, the next time I catch you smoking –
I'm going to knock your block off! "
I quit. Eleven years before the Surgeon General's report
I knew that smoking was hazardous to my health.

Bill Grace

The Tale Of The Yoplait Skunk

It came, it saw, the container it thought it conquered
Held so fast that two days captive in it found no release
All the King's horses and all the King's men
Were before this quiet tragedy helpless to help.

This skunk who destroyed my day
And in the course of close heroics
Fortunately or by God's grace did not spray
Was last seen by neutral observer
Tapping out the distance by head towards another part of town.

From the trauma of this drama I have sincerely resolved
No more half finished yougurt cups
Will ever again in outgoing trash be allowed.

Bill Grace

The Thank You

When the daughter of fourteen years gave the unbidden 'thank you'
I was surprised – mind – not being on folded laundry
It made me reflect on the father who raised me
The emperor who never said thank you nor his boss
The things of formation were just expected
There was no recognition for community compliance
Jesus somehow knew of gratefulness
It is in the gospel where, a cup of water given – is told.
Dad's harshness did not teach me 'thank you' but Jesus did,
Mother helped. Most powerful two words I know. Thank you.

Bill Grace

The Thing We Can Not Get Around

The great truth I find in Christianity
Is that nothing moves with out sacrifice
Jesus calls me to his cross
A call I do not want to hear.
The gospel of John Wayne is much more attractive
That true grit will over come adversity
Rather than reliance upon a G-d we can not see
Whose silence we know is deafening even for great saints.
The thing we can not get around
Is that almost nothing truly moves
With out the sweet scent of sacrifice.

Bill Grace

The Tide Of Battle

At Midway the tide of battle
Changed very fast - two to three minutes -
If I am correctly informed.
A torpedo squadron sacrificed itself
To the attention of the gunners
Which allowed the dive bombers
To decisively strike.
Forget the Ides of March.
It is the tide of battle
Where you need to watch.

Bill Grace

The Tie

The edge of the hurricane brings rain to Texas always an event
Our newspaper has gone through this before carefully sealed in double bags with
faced ends
Almost always some water this does send
Print to soggy reading.
All this being true
That care had been taken to tie the end caught my eye
Despite the paper's inevitable fate
What I took as care for reader was a mistake
Economics being supreme as usual
With tie only one bag was needed to hold off a customer spate.

Bill Grace

The Tiger's Grief

We who grieve understand you better Tiger Woods
The loss of your father
Death that cuts in two while leaving whole.
I admire the peace the press tells you have
And after the final shot the tears that broke
That told the whole world how much you missed him
How much you loved him
And that you are whole
Champion or not you are whole.

Bill Grace

The Trouble

The trouble with reading good poetry
Is that if you write it at all unless very gifted
The poverty is clear
The greater power of others so apparent
You hope that God is a reader
That somehow somewhere there is an understanding in the universe
Of the things you feel but can not find one word to utter.

Bill Grace

The True Tale Of Mr. Peaches The Rat

The docent who put the madagascar cockroaches
Through the washer and dryer that lived
Gave us sage advice when to girbel or not to girbel
Was the question of the day.
The rat he informed made a vastly better pet.

So the cute little mousie type became the rat
And joined the corporation of corgy and company
with all of its accompaniment of three cats.

The docent's analysis was true
A critter presence I do not rue
Which is quite a confession from the farm boy
Who once found them such fun to shoot.

The magic here is not alone Disneys
No love for its tail have I
But the truth is this unthinkable's a pet
With a personality that can be a pest
I will let your imagination do the rest
The rascal will probably be with us
Until the day that he dies.

Bill Grace

The Wink's The Evil Thing

The wink is the evil thing

A predator upon those who do not know,
By those who do.

It allows us to pretend that we are clean

When we are not -

Gives sin its bad name when deserving of respect,

And mocks the sacrifice of far too many

Who never had the chance of its greater vision.

Bill Grace

The Wonder Of A Friend Lost

The wonder of a friend lost
Is that so little was spoken
Unlike those of field and pen
Much more than a nod would have been the exception
My signal of great respect was in that winged Alamo
A decent guy quietly and quickly doing his job
I will miss him every time I visit
That once upon a time garage turned eatery.

Bill Grace

The Wonder Of Your Eyes

A love poem striking
Between deepest sleep
And seeing off daughter and wife
For the normal commerce of the day
Interrupts the safe conventions
Demands fear and the severity
Of a Puritan self governance.

I can not help wondering
Was it God or Devil then
That arranged our chance meeting
There being no communication between our worlds?
Having seen you more than once before
Your eyes at last were seen
With wonder force electric enough to almost
Rouse old bones from deepest sleep
To celebrate that time.

Bill Grace

The World Discovers Color

Slowly the world discovers color
Healing from pain more infinite than the heavens
Those things which have made us less than sane
Marrying us to flesh and its darker power
That keep us from a better vision.

Bill Grace

The World's Way For Dogs

It is late and I am tired
Marks on this piece of paper
Celebrate that the dog is upstairs
That he probably does not want a midnight walk
But this does not matter
Even if I love the dog
I can not let him win
He must pee before we let him truly rest,
It is the world's way for dogs.

Bill Grace

Theological Imperative

As the Psalms were good enough for Jesus
So they are good enough for me
Well worth the moment to read daily.

Bill Grace

Theological Pre`cis In Upstate Newyork

Those years of serving Mass have cast their spell
Better than Father Tom could ever have hoped
Who ever would guess a life time rebel becoming orthodox?
So sadly but with a bit of wisdom
I understand Jim Whyte's position:
'Our hope is not here.'
And must say 'Amen'
To the sage of Whyte's Garage of Freeville, New York
While marveling again
At where God has raised us up a prophet.

Bill Grace

Theology From Loving Two Cats

With the puppy coming into the house
The uneasy sphere of influence peace
Of the two cats ended.
With "Squirt" at my head
Lilly at my feet
I understood how God can love
Both Blue and Gray
German and American
Yet remain neutral in these historic conflicts
With hope that the better natures
Of the animals will prevail.

Bill Grace

Theology Is More Than Dancing Angels

Theology is more than dancing angels
Though it has taken me a life time to see it
Good Catholic boy that Dad reared and
Thomas Aquinas loving them so.

THis poem will remain under constructin for the next three days.

Bill Grace

Therapy In America At Christmas In 2014

The therapist
helps the poet
with healing, hope, peace
Christ in our day
but
please have the
120 with you.

Bill Grace

Therapy Session #476

The shame of an 82 average half a century ago
Unbidden, unknown, felt but with out form
Was a quiet cancer
Eating peace more than body.

John's Gospel tells us the truth will make us free
I can only be honest
For me it has been therapy
Jesus has granted what others might call
The good luck.

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Bill Grace

There Is A Call - 3

There is a call
Deeper than the flesh that holds us captive
There is a call.

There is a loyalty
Deeper than the bounds of time and place
There is a loyalty.

There is amidst the fear of missing life
A deeper life than poet pens can glean
There is a deeper life.

There is a sin
More than all the words
Our best minds muster to name
There is a sin.

There is a freedom
Challenged by those great powers
That tell us that we must buy and buy and buy
There is a freedom.

There is a love
Which Christ brings to us
More powerful than the atom's flash
That disciplined in ways of faith
Can warm a sullen world - grant HOPE -
Where Spring's horizon can but barely beckon.

There is His call of love.

Bill Grace

There Is Something There

There is something there
That holds no guarantee like
Gravity against despair
There is something there
That is not fair
In a world of nature's strong.

I wish it were not so
The things that make us go
The glue I find that makes the planet spin
Comes back to a thing the ancients knew as sin.
Which is why I hope there is something there
Greater than a propensity for despair.

Bill Grace

Things Mundane That Hold The More

My life consists of things mundane
As that which holds the more:
Evening's obligatory walk of dog
Cat laying siege for treat
Toast before retiring
Time and space traveled before flat screens
Thoughts of old class mates forever lost
Family loves and loved
The deep night quiet of the house
Night lights
Night
A poem's final period.

Bill Grace

Thirty Two Years

In the great cafeteria behind the Samson size pillars
I eat ice cream and write
The therapist has informed me
My daughter has learned guerilla warfare from me
I learned early you do not attack a tank from the front.
In the parking lot a secret beer and Burger King
In the cafeteria a very public ice cream
In the canteen/store of the once great hospital - combat gloves
Kevlar gloves with flammability resistance to 423 degree Fahrenheit
How things change in only thirty two years.

Bill Grace

This Church In Syber Space

This bully pulpit in syber space
By State of California standards is not a church place
Yet I would certainly hope to celebrate the Christ
Defending againt ether a left or right wing theological heist
In this world of change even the center must change
To accomodate the strange new
That seems only not to threaten the spiritual few.

Bill Grace

This Thing Of Little Boxes

On a morning when poetry whispers to me
The world does not automatically
Grant a blessing toward success
The new pen wanting testing
Demands a screw driver for release from box
And being released, though never used, rewards me
with a broken clip for thanks.
The screw driver box surrenders its piece
But protests with spewing anarchy.
On a morning when poetry whispers
This thing of little boxes can be a drag for me.

Bill Grace

Those Who Extend Themselves In Small Things

Those who extend themselves in small things
Almost never own the heights
Are regarded as a common sight
Yet in small things of love they live
The other the great seduction a sort of sieve
That catches the pieces of our lives that others hold
But age - and truth to proclaim - has made me bold
To state that it is the liquid that lives
The part poured through life's strange sieve.

Inspired by the life of Lt. Col. Robert Kaiser, West Point Class of 1954

Bill Grace

Those Who Have No Name

Those who have no name
Can in heart's memory be inscribed
The issue is not even a name
Than the center from which all else came.

Bill Grace

Three Cats

Three cats

Each one a history

#1 tamed off the street

Dog catcher denied.

#2 acquired through a neighbor

A grief replacement

For the number one's companion

Lost to owl power.

#3 a shop cat once

We loved her window antics with our daughter

Granted asylum when the flower shop closed.

A history of three cats.

Bill Grace

Three Eyes In Darkness Glowing

Three eyes glowing in the dark
two are yellow the red one's stark
this was no walk in the park
I punched yellow out
then I punched red
then all were gone
three lights non-glowing
by the side of my bed.

(A poem inspired by a computer power controller strip in a moment of nondrug induced fantasy.)

Bill Grace

Three Gods Best Avoided

Power, pleasure and fame are three Gods best avoided
Power for leading only to its own corruption
And denial of death where power ends.

Pleasure for its involution upon the self
Where freedom lies in finding others
The self a false center.

Fame for ephemeral lure
To those deprived of love's true nourishing milk
Easily forgetting that ax murderers
Have fame to no avail.

Power, pleasure and fame are three Gods best avoided.

Bill Grace

Three Lights

If you can witness
The coming of bright morn's light
Do so and celebrate your great good fortune,
But, remember the humble candle when enclosed by darkness
For the issue in our lives is frequently hope
Which often can feed on very little and live
So a humble flickering flame can remind us
That we are not alone - at least long enough to hope.

Bill Grace

Three Line Meditation

I take waiting as a holy time
The world thinks the waits all on its dime
Which kicks God out or some other greater thing.

Bill Grace

Three Lines Of Imperative

As the Psalms were good enough for Jesus
So they are good enough for me
Well worth the time to read and meditate upon daily.

Bill Grace

Three Men Who Haunt A Poet

Haunted by three men I've never met
Jesus so famous yet to some more like a set
Thomas Moore lost his head to a King
Compared to his soul to him it was just a thing
George Marshall confounds the first two
Shows how divinity does not always act as the glue.

Bill Grace

Three Police Reports

Having three police reports in the historical record
My insurance company being pleased with other's paying
When my father had none
It seems to me the issue is not who is at fault
But the simple reality that a bump is a bump
And a crash of any magnitude is best avoided
By the severe vigilance of defensive driving.

Bill Grace

Time-Age-Wisdom

The great sin is in knowing
The young being easy experts at this task
Holy doubt, unknowing and even mystery call
But these are functions of time, age and wisdom.

Bill Grace

Timeline Of An Obscure Poet

When the first poem came
My English teacher shrugged
No Sylvia Plath here, attracting
Instant notice of some immense talent.
Two years later a second outbreak
The eventual base from which
First publication came.

Chapbooks have been my life blood
The first in seventy six - second, in ninety six
In 2010 the third may come
With assistance from 's feedback system
A sort of poor poet's editor that at last tells me
When something has been read twice.

Bill Grace

Tire Shop Gal

She enjoys her work.

You can tell by the way:

She moves her arms

Smiles at coworkers

Has you park

Runs old tires to the recycle bin

The kid in command.

I don't know about

Women in combat.

This tire shop gal

Holds her own I'm sure.

The difference from the guys

Here - is only in the plumbing

and that she does not jiggle

When she runs.

Bill Grace

Title

The terrible thing about being addressed as 'Colonel'
Or any other thing of hierarchy
Is that about the number 1,000
You start to believe it.

Bill Grace

To A Consistent Reader

If I am fortunate enough to have you
The statistics do not tell me who you are
So we are safe from vanity's or the world's intrusion
Publicly written but in a private spirit
Much as old lovers might be addressed in this space
If I had the good fortune to know that they were reading
To make an apology for sins previous to The Great Decision.

Bill Grace

To A Performance Poet Unknown

Performance poets be aware or at least guarded
Despite you great success
You may or may not possess
The element of great nobleness
Of interest to more than a few of us
Who follow lives as much as words
Those who wonder when wandering
In the historical sheets
Where we will find the black historical bird
Frequently hidden in pride and power and possessions
Things that own us far more than we own them
Freedom from the powers of their tyrannies
That God alone has power to grant.

Bill Grace

To A Poet On Rating His Or Her Poem

I do not vote the poems of others
I do not presume to judge
but if you take my breath away
make my heart run fast or beat a little more slow
I will read you again and again
and search your most minute works out
nor say a word to you of agony or ecstasy you stirred within me
but never will I put a number on your work.

Bill Grace

To A Russian Blue With Yellow Eyes

You lay your head upon my foot,
tell me I am accepted.
This poet has always been
a little less genetically engineered
perhaps this is why
I can relate to cats.

Bill Grace

To All Brothers Of Deeper Bond Than Blood Or Church Or Law Or Time

I hope that by some grace you will forgive the dark swirling clouds of my soul,
I hope you will forgive past times that I have hurt you,

I hope you will forgive the inadvertent but almost certain future times that I
will hurt you,
I hope you will forgive me and thee.

Bill Grace

To An Athlete Observed And Imagined

When you have burned every ounce of fat that steals your muscles' oxygen
And disciplined your muscles too
When you have pushed yourself past pain to the strange land of numb
When you have claimed the table as well as the field as your province
When all of body, mind, and spirit come to competition's point for nought
Still I hope that you will know that you are special
Saluted here and in the future much more will come
A thousand greetings honoring in myriad waiting ways
Not a foolish little Greek god – or other – who cannot stay
But a moment complete in self and a pulse in the mind of others
Beyond the herd of victim-victors something of divinity that is ok.

Bill Grace

To Bob Whelan On Discussing Pablo Neruda

Even with eyelids closed
fresh sun
beckons
to a new day
New challenges
New depths
New heights
even with eye lids closed.

Bill Grace

To Carlos Fuentes

The newspaper tells me you were a noble soul
The internet much less kind
If the print reportage is true I have a debt to you
In the granting of hope to one who is obscure.
When I read you left the mighty
To visit your aged nanny
I knew I loved you
Who thought a hundred years not too much
To be discovered, citing Stendhal's 'Le Rouge et le Noir.'
The poverty of my undergraduate years shows
Our wonderful world literature professor never mentioned you
Although in fairness you were in the wrong hemisphere
And the Mexican students were not massacred until 1968,
I guess I have always had a thing for long distance runners
Even when death has sealed their race.

Bill Grace

To Do List Anti-Toxin

This I am sure of
Finding very little that is sure
What we aim at we will mostly hit
Though God contains the precision of the bullet's flight
We end in destinations we can not imagine.
Put good things on your 'to do' list
Trust the pain to God's keeping
Of the things you can not list.

Bill Grace

To Helen A Love Poem

With the yapping Corgi puppy walked
daughter safely on an Oklahoma Indian reservation
wife heating up hot shower pipes
I can at last do
what even my ailing body has denied
write.

So, to you dear Saint Helen,
patron saint of a poet out of favor,
may the Great Other bless you
for your reading eyes of extant work.

Friendship
tea
offering to pick up the tab at lunch
education on food
wise medical counsel
use of your first rate lap pool
for all these blessings bestowed
here where we struggle
thank you.

I can only hope

to be ahead of the pack
that some fierce truth
is occasionally spoken,
that my spell checker
will not betray the poverty of my spelling,
and that
with your wonderful husband watching,
we will yet water walk again.

Bill Grace

To John Ashbery

We are grateful to you
Those who you will never touch
That you are controversial
That you love blank verse
That you confirm that there is space in the universe
For those of us who do not conform and are not pretty.

Bill Grace

To See America Work

To see America work
Is an energizing thing
A woman from Alaska
As a back up for her king.

A man of color
Reaching for the ring
The beauty of multiple dimensions
Making hearts of many sing.

Yes, to see America work
Is a glorious thing.

Bill Grace

To Some Hoped For Critic Of The Future

From Norman Mailer on 'Charlie Rose'
And from my great professor Bob Kimball
I have absorbed the dictum
That the task is to sense and write
And leave the pile for others to judge
In hope that like Dickinson's drawer
That when it is opened
Even though it did not go Ka-Ching!
Something of merit was still found inside.

Bill Grace

To The Impoverished A Jesus Almost Always With Head Of Thorns

The radio tells of rice price inflation

Rice price sounds nice

But belies the suffering of Filipino poor - others

And all systems that move with the underlying question:

What's in it for me?

That only a Christ crowned with thorns could even hope to answer.

Bill Grace

To The Poet Sandra Fowler

I bumped into you again
I can tell you how,
and
why
does not truly matter
now you are gone.

It is peace to have known you
Shared admiration for your work
An unexpected package in the mail
We owned hands that never touched.

It will be good to taste again
All that you have left us
The Library of Congress 180 list
Can wait

A
Day
A
Week
A
Month
A
Year
A
Decade

I will grieve.

No more emails from you
Still
I will hear your voice
As I did this evening
Not knowing you were
What this world calls dead.

But
Google
Rarely fails me
And now has told me twice
Of ones I loved
Who have left without permission
Without so much
As a note entrusted to a faithful agent.

I am pissed
but this great feeling comes
only after
a stab deep within
this heart
and the bitter knowing
that you are gone.

The only thing
that blocks death's chill
better than love
is poetry,
poetry and love
an intimation of eternity.

Bill Grace

Tom Helm For Governor Of Texas

I do not like a fight
Where the odds are a 1,000 to 1
For the other side.
TOM HELM FOR GOVERNOR OF TEXAS
KBH preparing for this from her adolescence
RP proven in the ring
The steppes of Texas vast beyond comprehension
Especially for a man with out the backing of a party.
TOM HELM FOR GOVERNOR OF TEXAS
I do not doubt his intelligence or steel
Have watched his vision triumph
Over entire committees that voted: `no.`
TOM HELM FOR GOVERNOR OF TEXAS
My debt to him enormous
A boss cut from the cloth of Marshall`s bolt
(For those students who know the history of military institutions.)
TOM HELM FOR GOVERNOR OF TEXAS
He is my friend it is this simple
We shared an invisible uniform for years
Already I have watched close confederates
Back peddle now that that he is not powerful and useful.
TOM HELM FOR GOVERNOR OF TEXAS
If Texas were to know him
Texas would love him
I do.
TOM HELM FOR GOVERNOR OF TEXAS

Bill Grace

Top Dog - Under Dog

The long and sad shadow of slavery
Has top dog under dog as one of its more lasting curses
Which as we believe it is true,
It is.

Bill Grace

Touching Lincoln's Face

When the reproduction
of the life mask came
I could touch Lincoln's head.

It is an experience
to be with the great emancipator
without his hair.

Cheek bones are high
relatively sharp
but the massive brain commands
only an intimation
of that great integrity
which just as it
would not be a slave
so -
it would not be a master.

Bill Grace

Tour Of House Beautiful With Lunch

The Lady had twenty three stores
Yet she wanted more
I was too busy being impressed
To notice she was oppressed
By always wanting more.

Bill Grace

Tourbillon Personality

Develope your self

It will serve you well

Loose fit for battle

Tight fit if you ever get to court

Develope yourself but always remember

All the parts must work together.

Bill Grace

Tracking The Storm

Early morning lightning
Has power I will not dismiss
Counting the storm's movement by its strikes
Three miles, five then seven
Seeing the slight flash
Then carefully counting the seconds
At twenty the lowest rumble,
For what seems a gray dawn eternity
Tracking the storm
From behind heavy closed curtains.

Bill Grace

Traffic

The waitress is very nice
'Traffic is very slow today -
I'm going home early -
I've passed you to Theresa
Who will take care of you.'
Traffic with out a car.

Bill Grace

Traffic Sphinx Ii

Especially in heavy traffic you find them
in the hour of commuting it is guaranteed
sphinx like attached to wheels
they are frozen to the machines they love
that bring them to their place of bread and cheese.
Heaven help if you need a break in traffic
you will drown
as surely as the Titanic ignored the distress calls
of other ships that fateful night.

Bill Grace

Training Accident

I grieve a young soldier I never met
From a valley where I rarely go
All known of him is from a newspaper
That helped paint the color into the familiar lines.
Anne was correct in her prophecy from student days
That it would destroy me if I had to see them die.

I came to love them enough though
From just learning their stories.
To almost freely destroy a career,
It required what was probably over identification.

God in great mercy killed the career
So I did not have to see them die
The death of the career was depression enough
From what many surely regarded
As only a training accident.

Bill Grace

Transaction

The waitress quotes a beer at \$3.50
The register corrects at \$4.00
She gets her \$1.00 tip
I smile and sweetly state Sam's sells
A six pack of the brand for under six
We are both happy
It is corporate who does not know
Who will never see my money again.

Bill Grace

Transaction II

The young woman
strokes an old man's hand
as she gives the change.

The old man
celebrates:
I am alive
I can tell
her hand is soft
perhaps I can even again learn
how to hope.

Bill Grace

Trash-Red And White

Trash red and white
Red for recycle
White the martyr's color
For that which truly has no use
Red and white colors distinct enough
A color blind trash man
Could distinguish enough to do his job
Red and white always better than red and black.

Bill Grace

Tribute - Fae M. Adams, M.D. - 8

Once they dug me out of hideing
She was my ultimate boss.
The first woman doctor to hold
A regular commission in the Army,
I asked once if she had treated
Any of the World War II Greats.
A gracious commander she answered:
'No, but I treated their wives.'
The quote best remembered
Had a living fire from that era.
'I knew some tremendous men.'
Her words simple and direct.
The tone told of suffering at which I could only guess
And willing sacrifice.
I asked no further questions of the good Colonel.
As I proceeded to help pay off
The very bad purchase of Viet Nam
On the installment plan.

Bill Grace

Trip Gear

Heavy underwear that makes Nautica earn their name
Aunt Ruth's old socks from adolescent years
Eleanor's belt celebrating a 6th grade victory
Laurie's gift of Fairbanks nudge in shirt that actually fits.

Heavy oiled leather of high ankle shoes
That can save from shoveled snow
From when there was income of position
Far more than job,

With care and time past
Things can form a travel outfit
Adequate to new day.

Bill Grace

Trucks In Susan B. Komen Pink

When the burly owner of the company
Lost his mother to cancer
He kept his vow and painted his trucks pink
I doubt it hurt business a bit
There is something about an air conditioning and heat man
Arriving in a pink truck
Especially if you know the story of a son's love.

Bill Grace

Truth And Policy - Dedicated To Bob Whelan, Friend And Mentor

Policy and truth these two abide
Best to know which one is on your side
Which one you feel is worthy of the fight
Which one from which sometimes you must take flight.

Bill Grace

Trying To Understand Texas

If you are trying to understand Texas
It helps to remember that you are going to a different land
That has given us two of our four last Presidents
And even has an alligator season.

Bill Grace

Tsunami And Prayer

They say the Tsunami moved Japan ten miles
Given that we do not understand what we are up against
I nominate this thing called prayer
Not the type to garner votes for want to be Presidents
But quiet and sincere preferably in a closet
As directed by Jesus
Holy as a poem known only to the Big Guy.

Bill Grace

Turbe By Bob Whelan

The sweet smell of sage in crisp air made me enter in,
Such a small room of tasaruff, wool cloaks and red fez next to nea and chanter,
Little of rank or status separated the order - only age and respect gilded this
room

A portal to the hereafter with tea on their lips
They dress as God was the bride and they were the groom,
Life serenely lifts from their shoulders as they gyrate
One hand to God - one to gloom.

The nea sounds as screaming from being snatched from the soft reed bed
'To Allah come back you reflection
Of the divine and all will be as is said.'
The turbe sure dance to the filtering light
A place of hallowed bone yet celebrating life.

There is an umlaut over the 'u' in turbe and tasaruff.

Bill Grace

Turkey Day News Paper

T - Day paper,
Little color bits fuel
A hunger never filled
Something precious dies.

Bill Grace

Tv Cognoscente

Charley Rose I like you

TV cognoscente

And enjoy your public struggles

With the dark sides of the force

And hope someday you will discover

This thing of which Menninger has lamented as passing from us,

An ancient thing, very unpopular to the world's present mechanics -

SIN.

Bill Grace

Twenty Days To Christmas In 2005 A.D.

Across the green manicured lawns
With white light deer
Through the thermal glass
Past the heavy brocade Santa
(another ever elegant product of China)
In a silence of a house
That would rival any cathedral
I heard the distant baby cry
So clear even the dog looked up with apprehension
And well he should.

Bill Grace

Twilight Things

So much of my life was wasted:

Ambition, lust, depression, anger,
The things that built a decent twilight
but only through God's grace.

I count now as gain the despised things

The poetry - even that not honored -
Women, who teased, but would not have me
Animals - particularly a heroic dog of youth
An ordination at an outcast church
A baptism not built on fear
A distant child saved from prejudices scourge
An ancient license plate of establishment sin

Strange, the things we cherish at twilight. -

Never more than the forms of love.

Bill Grace

Copyright retained

Bill Grace

Two Hype Tales

For years my being a watch nut -
when the great astronaut came to visit -
I asked him
about
the Omega space watch.
The story he told
was quite simple.
Near launch
someone
felt the astronauts
should have a watch.
So, someone
went down to the base exchange
which just happened to have
three Omegas in stock.

Voila!

With a dash of Madison Avenue
for leaven
THE MOON WATCH
was born.

Witness copy from the box
Of a Fisher Space Pen:
' xxx
Xxx'
Interesting
the Russians figured out
a pencil could work just fine.

On
THE MOON WATCH
I only know
central inventory
was never able
to fill my order.

Bill Grace

Two Angels Came To My Door

Two angels came to my door
Both far too vivid for a dream
With space of about a week
Or was it two?
The second a remarkable split up her dress
And intelligent and pretty.
I've always been a little slow with women folk
And wonder now if there was an agenda
Deeper than subscription sales
In that visitation of angels.

Bill Grace

Two Apostles Of Life

During the great Crisis of Missles
When Kennedy quite wisely over rode his generals
Khrushchev rushed to say we had a deal
Another wisdom was upheld: 'Make sure they see you coming.'
Two great cultures and a world were spared annihilation
In a drama that has no room for bravado
Leaders almost always set the tone from which so much proceeds.

Bill Grace

Two Bottles

Two beer bottles by the road nicely upright
It is fearing their drug powers that make me up-tight
What stories might be uttered
If with ears they heard the tales
Of walls that testify to private hells
Much more than two bottles abandoned upright
Sentries once guarding the prisoner at cause
Of our most common social violations.

Bill Grace

Two Cats

When you own two cats
You must feed both of them
When they come for food
At the same time.

Bill Grace

Two Cats Observed

Now that in winter
The house temperature
Is set at 68
I can't help but observe
The cats are much more apt
To be found sleeping together
Not nearly so much by affection
Or even some peculiar sense of shared fate
As a need that keeps each other warm.

Bill Grace

Two Coaches

Zigmund and Kimbol
Sounds like a law firm
In a sense they were.
They did not like me very much
On their track I did not often win -
And when I did it was because
I had learned to listen vastly more
To my coach within.

Bill Grace

Two Days After Learning Of Arthur G. Kaplan's Death

The wound is very present
But not bleeding from the post card that informed me
Blood clotting from the day's business:
Doughnuts purchased for Sunday School
Daughter taken to a morning's gymnastic lesson
Photograph with Alamo backdropp required in down town San Antonio
Lunch with wife and daughter on the fly
Telephone call from the General
The busyness that takes the mind from its ache
Perhaps, even begins to assist the process of healing.

Bill Grace

Two Lines Of May 12,2009

The youth thinks s/he will tear up the world and
Discovers as adult the reality is completely
The other way around.

Bill Grace

Two Points On The Line Of A Commercial Passage

Before the internet when television was a trinity
It was ok to hunt in work clothes
There was no prescribed uniform
Today the powers tell us
Camouflage is the order of the day
Camouflage the thing which we must buy and have.

Bill Grace

Two Post Modern Sales Engaged

There was once a time when a sale was real
When seller and buyer each held their fire
Perhaps not so good a fit if you waited
Today my experience is
The classic goods are withdrawn – sent back
Zip off pants, a Charley Brown Great Pumpkin T –
I suspect quite a list could be developed.
It is the maximization of profit I resent
It is the conspiracy against
A little thing called deferred gratification
That once upon a time if you waited
You got what you wanted – or at least hoped for –
for a little less
Once even the sale of a fish
Was under the Lordship of Christ.

Bill Grace

Two Questions

Our institutions ask:

What can you do?

Jesus asks:

“What can you be?”

Bill Grace

Two Theologies

The label on the box tells of the conflict
The product name a synonym for quality
These names of old tell us when we once were great
When there was at least some fragment of a basis for arrogance
Now the box has two labels
That are as one attached by a perforation
The tag complies with the requirement of law
The great product name stands alone
It will be adequate for the power of a gift
Only a blemish need be removed: 'Made in China.'

Bill Grace

Ultimately

it is upon us
the stars have little sway
our course lies in our day
minutes building into hours and years
we need caution of our tears
yet owning the deeper wounds
lest the spirits of healing
infect present time.

Ultimately it lies in God
that great and silent current
that may or may not grant safety to us,
I do not trust savants
that can be seen and heard
when wisdom dictates
so much more is there
than sense.

The church must play the fool
where prophesy is dead
while far away I see
a distant cross of truth
hear the whimper
of the lives upon it.

Bill Grace

Uncle Al's Legacy

No one in our family ever touched his hand
Yet reading holds many treasures
Given only for the price of time
So Albert Schweitzer can touch
One never met in person with his life sublime.

Gandhi cost me a fortune yet I never met him either
Their lives ones of the most striking integrity
But Schweitzer left a phrase that travels with me -
'Reverence for life' - not a bad phrase for a rural boy
Who once killed twenty three wood chucks
On what I thought was a great spring vacation.

Bill Grace

Uncle Al's Legacy Rewrite

No one in my family ever touched his hand
Yet reading holds many treasures
Given for the price of time
So Albert Schweitzer's life has touched mine.

Gandhi cost me a fortune yet I never met him
Their lives ones of the most striking integrity
Though Schweizer gave a phrase -
That travels with me - 'Reverence for life'
Not a bad phrase for a rural boy
Who has come a long way
From killing woodchucks for sport.

Bill Grace

Uncle Bill Goes Cold Turkey

When the pain came to his legs
Not the pain from the auto accident that almost killed him
But the pain from cigarettes he regularly smoked
The good doctor took the clue from a medical journal - quit -
and the pain stopped.

In my struggles I do not have my uncle's steel.
Two %, one and a half %, one %, one half % - GOAL!
Perhaps the issue is not the goal
But method that makes it work.

Bill Grace

Uncle Don

The man who truly had everything
Including a visit from Eleanor Roosevelt
Taught me the word 'dimension'
With a 'No'!

The mischief of that interchange so long ago
is amazing in its capacity for destruction.
My wife recoils at my embrace of its pharasaic face.
A shadow of such strength and length though he is gone,
That what was his is now my own.

The question is if it is an evil power or a thing that can bless with light
To watch for pot holes in the road of a journey through the night.

Bill Grace

Unexpurgated Ponderings Of Robert E. Whelan

Published With Permission - A

Ponder for the Pilgrimage (Just thoughts to make things more Human)

1. Religion is too important to be taken seriously. Religion should be fun.
2. You cannot define your faith by denigrating some other faith.
3. Christianity was built on Judaism. At least 60% is the same.
4. Jesus was always a Jew. God's promises to the Jews never changed.
5. Theology is talk about God. No absolutes. Be wary of absolutists, iconoclasts. No dogma. Self proclaimed prophets should stay in a cave.
6. All religion is conceptual.
7. Truth and fact are very different.
8. Nothing is infallible.
9. After lots of years of studying theology, I have come to only one conclusion:
1) There is a God, and 2) I am not He.
10. Religion and spirituality are very different.
11. It is the pleasure of God to conceal and the honor of persons to reveal. The pilgrimage is everything.
12. The 'church' is everyone, not everything. It is nothing intangible, e.g. 'bride of Christ.'
13. Church history is all the actions that have led us to today. We choose those current actions which lead us into tomorrow.
14. Old is neither good or bad authoritative or not, just old.
15. The church has 95% of the functions as a business.
16. Any attempt to treat people as a mass should be avoided.
17. There is no kingdom of God to come versus the kingdom of earth. They are all together.
18. Control and guilt are exceedingly common.
19. Serious prayer and spirituality are uncommon and that is OK. There is no pattern and laity should not seek convents.
20. The first step to the divine is 'awe.' The last is 'aha.'
21. The best prayer is one person being with their God. It is all about being available to God, not finding God.
22. Anyone doing it for a living is suspect. The unexamined religious life is not worth living. Total acceptance is hateful. Doubt is good.
23. Every age rewrite, reinterpret and regards differently the religion handed down. Choose your own and stick to it.
24. Religion is what you make it. Invest heavily. It is worth it.
25. At very least be respectful of the name of 'God.' Use it lovingly or not at all.

Do not presume to speak for Him or say what will please Him.

Bill Grace

Uniformity And Trash Cans

The trash cans stand like soldier sentinels before suburban homes
Their uniforms of dark olive plastic
Awaiting the trash truck's robotic touch
One more step towards uniformity
On which a host will feast.

Bill Grace

Unshackled!

When Fortune magazine on its cover proclaimed:
Unshackled! I felt a strange unease.
These were the Reagan years
A man I liked but was unsure of
If emptying the mental hospitals in California
Can only protect us from the other monsters.
Ultimately so much revolves to the integrity of language -
the discernment of those who hear -
which is a subtle thing ignored.

Bill Grace

Unshackled! Ii

When Fortune magazine on its cover proclaimed:
Unshackled! I felt a strange unease.
These were the Reagan years
A man I liked but was unsure of
If emptying the mental hospitals in California
Was the way to balance a state budget
For me government's monstrous size and power
Can only protect us from the other monsters.
Ultimately so much revolves to the integrity of language -
the discernment of those who hear -
which is a subtle thing too often ignored.

Bill Grace

Untitled - July 24,2016

During the roving dinner party
with food and gifts and the warm fireplace
the special operations veteran took me aside
took me to a room lined with fountain pens
confession and testimony
a story of fields of bones - die leiden menscheit
of deaths beyond its many levels
ache in a voice
pride in the history of a father's greatness.
With the close listening
something twisted deep inside
moist eyes betrayed what lips would never utter,
a moment of rare regret,
that I could not raise my arm in absolution
speak words of repatriation and reconciliation.

At home after the party
Robinson Jeffers was read
(Hurt Hawks, Shine Perishing Republic)
as penance for a fallen altar boy
who just heard his first confession
with out faculties.

Bill Grace

Untitled - July 4,2016

The girl at the door of Wendy's nicely tells me
at 0800 (oh eight hundred)
they do not open
until 9.

I am watching
the building of a new Wal-Mart.
'FIVE STATE HELICOPTER'
has joined the struggle
moving huge
concrete bath tubs
half the size
of a Normandy pill box
to the inside
of prefabricated walls
of the emerging temple.

The men in orange shirts
form a fire team
each must signal
that his chain is secure
before the monster
can take up the slack.
5 STATE is a powerful machine
Its rotors stir
my black coffee into waves,
orchestrate a deja vu.

The strange pulsing sound
of egg beaters
more powerful than gravity
and I am on the ground again
protected from the same sun
by a hamburger emporium's umbrella
Viet Nam remembered
but not experienced.

Bill Grace

Untitled In April,2016

I admire the poet assassins with their perfect technique
find their destructiveness more than a little bleak
realizing only a few poets will write so well to be remembered.
For me it is a grace that any poet soul would ever try to tell
of paths that split in woods - love that knows no bounds -
or even celebrating
the death of death.

Bill Grace

'V' Is For...

The letter on ancient television,
before color came to culture's seduction,
black and gray
enhancing a scene of sultry wave
introducing the great war drama
of 'Victory at Sea.'

Winston Churchill

converting fingers to instant semifores
of 'V' for victory
at the Great War's end
cherubic smile
on his fat face.

Your telling
no one had
ever called you 'V'
and this meaning so much to me.

Bill Grace

Vacuous Acquisition

The theologian Jacque Ellul has stated
That the watch is the symbol of modern man.
After almost a life time of desire
I acquired this object's long sought face and name,
Discovered in its functioning the hollowness of my acquisition,
The pain of embracing advertising's big lie -
That a thing can make you happy.

I should have known better,
The subconscious being as powerful as it is,
That Mother Theresa's wisdom couldn't hold
My cynical friend from the world of advertising being correct
I didn't stand a chance.

The material world IS complicated
A good pair of sneakers athletically owned
Are hard to deny in impact where only
The most young and desperate make them idols of worship.

Beware: the child, the house, the car, the title, the woman's image;
Those long sought objects of desire
When something as simple as sneakers
May well be where your true satisfaction will lie.

Bill Grace

Verdun Pax - (Snippets) 3

In Verdun I have seen
Land moguls of the war
Unhealed by a century
Still bleeding aced crosses.
The darkness of war
That strips the human soul
Lies buried in the heart
That Christ would touch,
If we could but feel
The deeper meanings of His word.

Bill Grace

Very Much For Flossing

Modern life is a fast paced zoo and
Our teeth being part of this calculus too
Failure to floss is an issue for
There is a struggle for better quality of years
Which is balanced off against time demands and
The pull of fears.

For logevity's sake I advocate slow rising so
Before morning's most early light
The dark conceals the grissly sight
Of this old boy flossing.

It starts my day in a very nice way
Helping my teeth do better and that
Nice young dentist with no hairs of gray
Has finally come to have his say
In this gruesome matter of flossing.

Bill Grace

Veteran's Mass With Flowers

In Europe which has suffered much
From the dark side of who we are
They understand the importance of flowers
Their appropriate presentation.

I am not talking about the political flowers
That come in bundels
That Kings and Princes and Presidents receive.
At Sanssouci a single red rose was observed
Upon the smooth cement of Great Frederick's vault -
Perhaps it means nothing -
But I fear it is the thing I trust,
Certainly more than numbers.

A small group of veterans
The children presented us with red carnations
I was deeply touched at my first mass
Since burying my father
So much was perfect
I could not help but wonder
Despite the medieval structure
If God had planned a home coming
Complete with flowers never previously received.

Bill Grace

Veterinarian's Question

Why would you want to poison your dog?

- 1.. He is at his absolute appearance best when begging for food.
2. Upon opening a can of tuna his siege tactics rival those of Leonardo DaVinci.
3. He is more convenient than the garbage pail.
4. The kid does not consult about under the table food maneuvers.
5., , ,

Ok. Ok. We'll cut way back on the scraps.

Bill Grace

Viceroy Boy In Development

After 'Desert Storm'
after active duty
the Air Force awarded
a 20% dissablility
for breathing,
I am grateful for the tax break.

I am even more grateful
to my Father
who catching me smoking
the third time at age eight,
Viceroy the favored brand,
had some intense words.

'Bill, the next time
I catch you smoking
I am going
to knock your block off! '

Quitting was easy eleven years
before the Surgeon General's report
because I knew smoking was hazardous
to my health.

Bill Grace

Vignette Of An Evening In Texas With A Dog

The dog is aware
of the child
on the other side of the street
and asks to visit.

The child is aware
of the dog
and the young mother affirms
we can come over.

'Skipper' (the dog) thinks
that he is Lassie.
Child and mother affirm this identity.
He is special
he is loved
he is cute.
He gives kisses
on the nose
to little girls
who like him.

The South Texas evening
is not hot
is warm and pleasant.

The cat lays on the walk
the dog decides he will not
harass her this time.

Wife pays for dinner.

Daughter - 18 - is out on a date.

A sign on a door calls out to me
in bold letters
the word:
TOGETHER.

Vince Dwyer's Cigar

Standing on a slight rise
Over the acres of parking lot
Pondering the enigma of auditioning a smart phone
Observing the automobile colors, shapes, owners
Taking in the distant bright sunlit buildings
I realized for a life time first
I was nothing more than a fish
Swimming in the material
Even an oxygen ocean
For sixty five years
Who until this very moment of declaration
Never had a clue.

Twenty nine years before
Vince Dwyer was enough of an authority
The Air Force chaplaincy paid me
To be his student,
He offered to meet with us individually
I was careful to keep the appointment
With this star of the spiritual and ecclesiastical stage
Shared a strange event that had happened
When fatigued a little too long
Learned that despite my world view
At age thirty six I had had a mystical experience
Which in no way kept the venerable Dwyer from enjoying his cigar.

Bill Grace

Vincent Van Gogh As A Transatlantic Seagull

Nancy Grace of once upon a time Philadelphia fame
Told me of a seagull she had witnessed
On a trip by boat to Europe,
Leaving port the other gulls turned back to land
But this gull followed the boat to Europe
Where upon arrival the creature was killed by the European gulls.
Though capable of spinning a good yarn
I do not think Nancy fabricated this story.
It seems Van Gogh was like this gull in art
Solitary in his courage and excellence
Who in his time flew solo to a new world
It makes me less quick to judge in many matters
Lest I become a killer gull.

Bill Grace

Violence

If violence invited us to parade
The thing would find itself alone
So the Devil being wiley wraps it in more attractive
Though often more fear filling garb:
'My right to..., ' states' rights, 'My country right or wrong...' WMD
Always check the pretty words
To see if violence lies behind.

Bill Grace

Visit To Brown's Ice Cream (Dairy Store) - Stillwater, Mn

At 920 Olive Street West
Forty blocks off the beaten track
A mountain of ice cream for the price of a dime
What poor tourists most need to know.

The locals have mastered their lessons so well
They are not confused by the word 'Nelsons' on the roof
Even as I cherish our young host's smile
Even as much as the miracle of dinner for the price of a dime.

Bill Grace

Visit To Padre Island National Seashore Texas 25 October 2009

The blue waves sing in white foam chorus
To smooth sand beyond mortal perfection
Daughter gives hand stand testimonies to her youth
A day of cloudless sky and nature's perfect balance.

The nice man from Nebraska
Who takes our picture
Helps us to understand with his history
That he has never before the present red tide
Seen the Beach so dirty.
Broken wings of butterflies float upon the surface
That christens burrowing sand dollars at its gentle edge.

Heaven
The silence of the beached jelly fish
Who even in death sting
The lure of the distant pilings
An intimation of heaven or eternity or something
But despite the distant oil rigs
Don't come here if you`re looking for work.

Bill Grace

Vocabulary's Power

It came as no small piece of education
When Bob Kimball spoke of:
'The inspiration of the Holy Spirit, '
The very same experience through Maslow's insight
I knew as 'peak experience.'
Great was the shock to learn
How much is vocabulary's power
To unite or to divide.

Bill Grace

Vocational Search Truth

There once was a man
who knew what he wanted to do.
So he went to Cornell after World War II
and truly lived under a veritable canoe.
You may think this story bizarre
but the kernel of its historicity is true.
With a moral quite proved -
unbelievable power
when you know what you want to do.

Bill Grace

Voice

Here I speak
Here you hear
Though hand to pen no longer clasps
To cast a word to paper.
A fragile thing a word
Still, it is my passion
And as I live it is
A fairer hand not being found.

Bill Grace

Vultures

The vultures feasted on the carcass all day
The goat that charmed on the church road could not stay
But much to our grief, through death, had gone on some other way
To a heaven we know not where.

Bill Grace

Waiting

Waiting for the great man
I write.
I am on time.
He has what I want.
The coffee is prepared.
A gift for his wife is present.
The weather is bad,
greater caution is the order
of driving.
How late will he be?
5 minutes
not so bad -
given the weather -
given the great man.

Bill Grace

Waiting - A Poem For Helen

Waiting for a father, while he built a school, to become a Dad
Waiting for the girl I never had
Waiting for aged police to catch the kidnapper of the violent crime
Waiting for a position that would leave more than a job's dime
Waiting while wondering during war
About the death that never came
Waiting to see the wonder of Jesus
Coming on the clouds
A life of relatively little sorrow
With most things that are ordinary
Come tomorrow.

Bill Grace

Walk

The dog demands his walk
'Duke' does his business
the world stops
the walk resumes.

Bill Grace

Walk II

The dog demands his walk
'Duke' does his business
the dog stops
the world stops
the walk resumes
the world resumes.

Bill Grace

Walk! Walk! Walk!

Walk! Walk! Walk! Please walk.

Dr. Mehmet Oz of considerable medical fame

Has spoken clearly again what we already knew

From the scientific heroics of the Mayo Clinic Gang

Walk if you will do only one thing to care for yourself

Walk if you want to live

This greatest gift of all gifts - life

Is buttressed best by a thing as simple as a walk

And unseen faith that its day for good will come

As surely as Jesus or visits to a doctor's office.

Bill Grace

Walking Puppy

When walking the puppy
It is obvious to everyone but me
That it is the owner who is being walked
And the smile that I see
Is the truth betraying this reality.

Bill Grace

Want To Be A Pilot?

My father served in the great war
I have his form letter from F.D.R.
With ancient yellow tape inside his war journal
Enamored of airplanes at an early age
I asked him once: 'Did you ever want to be a pilot? '
'No, ' he said. 'Not once I had to go out
and start picking up the pieces.'
I never told him about the consortium I found
Willing to explore a teen's transglobal air plans
Nor Mother, she simply could not have handled it.
Her goal was Harvard for her kid.

Bill Grace

War Case

The case that went to war
Would practice far and wide
For what became eventuality.
Despite healing efforts, it bears these scars.

It moves again but not to tune of war
To gather child from a distant land
Who we have come to love.

I wonder if this thing of swords to plowshares
Can apply not only to a travel case
But a host of other things,
That by God's grace
Can lead us from war's path
To greater respect and understanding
Where comes the better peace.

Bill Grace

War Games

In Germany the Kaiser always won the war games
The Pentagon here chose Colonel Paul Van Riper
Marine Corps, Combat Veteran, Retired
So able that he beat the odds
Won the war game and was fired.
There are always great dangers
When a Kaiser must always win at war games.

With thanks to Malcolm Gladwell's book 'Blink' pages 100 to 125 Back Bay
Books, paperback, copyright 2005

Bill Grace

War Wound

My father's wounds were real to me
His life holding very little of hypocrisy
If genes tell the story
His love of ice cream is mine
As well as capacity love things beautiful
His war is gone and mine as well
But I remember his war wound
A story he could only partially tell
That stood in the peculiar isolation of non-repetition.

Bill Grace

Watching Morning Come

I like to watch morning come
It is better than sleep sacrificed to Charlie Rose
A poem no more crazy than Faulkner
A sun that does not shine
A poem that does not rhyme
Or does it?
God beyond sun and time?

Bill Grace

Watching Washington Work

In the early days of convinced student ambition
I watched Washington work where even the press didn't care
The Special Subcommittee on Student Unrest to be exact the
Honorable Edith Green - Chair.

I recall the specific names and faces and antics and lack the courage to tell you
what truly went on.

Strangely I loved the representative from Alaska most, who later was killed in a
plane crash running for the Senate their bodies never recovered, and a
representative from New York City least - who wanted to be President.

The Alaskan was a man strangely full and the New Yorker strangely hollow but
this is my theological judgement.

What could a student possibly know who once wanted to be President himself
and lacks even today the courage to tell you how that little piece
of Washington worked?

Bill Grace

Wave By Hand

It is a small thing in the urban scene
As we scurry to and fro
Trying to make ourselves valueable to others
Trying to survive or thrive depending on our luck
Or grace of something beyond luck we can not know
It is the inner hand we show
No longer that required by a foe
To manifest the absence of a weapon
Today to show good will
Sometimes even a comradery deep
Although about the mission we do not speak.

Bill Grace

We Must Be Like Freud

We must be like Freud
And follow where the evidence may lead
Against the fashions of the day
Against the scorn of peers
Who knowing much still know not all
And holding our great capacity for error tenderly
Search for truth and state: 'Here I am..'
I could be wrong but this is how I see it.

Bill Grace

We Must Build A Firmament

The dog show allowed me to catch this lesson
Watching the most junior handlers and
The care of their seniors towards their development
That we must build a firmament more of stars
Than our fear of clouds.
Not for the navigation of great ships
But as the only surety for small and fragile lives
That live beyond the trajectories
Of great rockets that place men upon a moon.

Bill Grace

Wedding Meditation

Few marriages are made in heaven
These are among the harsh and hidden ways of life
So when you choose your life long friend and love
Remember that you also choose a business partner
Choose well then - and carefully -
To try and minimize the future's strife
For there is more to wedding than the wife.

Bill Grace

Welcome To Joint Base Lackland

It finally has come and will progress to others
On that small patch of land known so long
What has been fact since Yorktown
Our strength is in combined arms
Despite their being French at first proof!
Not in the pejorative of 'purple suit'
But much more dignified lexicon
Of joint base and joint service
Phrases worthy of our arms.

Bill Grace

Well Wishes Of The Season To All Of Six Pack Sensitivity

The sage six year old comes home from school and informs
That we must break each individual noose
Holding the plastic bottles to help protect entangled ducks
I applaud her and her teacher's Holden Caulfield sensitivity
And the young naval officer who first tried to recruit me
To this conspiracy of care twenty years ago.

Bill Grace

What The Church Can Learn From Hollywood

It is a matter of tensions.

Something real, something beautiful, a touch of hope -

at least enough to turn a page -

but most the strangeness of real

at least somewhere in the universe.

Bill Grace

When Death Comes To Those We Love

When death comes to those we love
It is not the thing of the academic funeral
But force which rips and tears the soul
Requires the ointment of time to heal
So profound are its wounds.

Bill Grace

When Death Unites

When this thing we call death claims me
Poor blind creatures that we be
Think of it as liberation to the Main
A life held by subtle passions and yet fearing - released,
It is ok.
From stars I came and will return.
Enough of The Other met
To grant perhaps a peace at passage.

Bill Grace

When Elizabeth Writes 43

When Elizabeth writes 43

She gives marching orders to all the world of poetry
That as poets our task is not even symmetry
Of word and rhyme or the catching of some immortal line
But to write and let the world
Sort out what is good and what is dross
Our task to write and leave to God
What only time can prove the words devine.

Bill Grace

When I Read The Great Poets

When I read the great poets
I do not forgive myself for being mediocre
I marvel at their great gifts of real, sometimes their rhythm and rhyme
Sometimes their capacity for play
Never do I want to pay the price of their greatness.
I will keep my mediocrity
Struggle on toddler feet towards forgiveness
For those who only had time for the great.

Bill Grace

When Moses Stood Before The Bush

When Moses stood before the bush
And asked 'I AM' His name
He quested in curisoity of a fire
That did not consume
And for us here today
Three thousand years after he is gone.

Bill Grace

When Prose Becomes Poetry - The Last Words Of Elizabeth Hutchinson Jackson To Andrew Jackson

'Andrew, if I should not see you again, I wish you to remember and treasure up some things I have already said to you. In this world you will have to make your own way. To do that you must have friends. You can make friends by being honest and you can keep them by being steadfast. You must keep in mind that friends worth having will, in the long run, expect as much from you as they give to you. To forget an obligation or be ungrateful for a kindness is a base crime, not merely a fault or a sin, but an actual crime. Men guilty of it sooner or later must suffer the penalty. In personal conduct be always polite but never obsequious. None will respect you more than you respect yourself. Avoid quarrels as long as you can without yielding to imposition. But sustain your manhood always. Never bring a suit in law for assault and battery or for defamation. The law affords no remedy for such outrages that can satisfy the feelings of a true man. Never wound the feelings of others. Never brook wanton outrage upon your own feelings. If you ever have to vindicate your feelings or defend your honor, do it calmly. If angry at first, wait till your wrath cools before you proceed.'

Bill Grace

When Something Is Corrupt

When something is corrupt
We enter the world of madness
His face and stained hair
On Yahoo yesterday
In court - sober
Coming out of the stupor
Of what ever it is.

Bill Grace

When The Writing Devil Strikes

When the writing devil strikes I write
Inspired by an overpriced candy bar
Or earth's arc at 40,000 feet
It does not matter
A kind clerk who lends her only pen
When I have a legion beyond reach
Is all it takes.

Bill Grace

When We Were Young

When we were young
We grew memories
Now that we are old
We visit them to be young.

Bill Grace

When You Meet The President Of The United States

When you meet the President
Say 'hello' and let him talk
This will put him at ease in your presence
Creating the familiar which always helps
As one who is used to be listened to.

Bill Grace

Why Cultures Fall

My daughter dressing for school
Struggles to change the color of
The bezel on her fashion watch
Given her by her mother.

I wonder if the intense young woman from China
Captured in the audience at Harvard
By the cameras at the great business seminar
Began her day with some similar distraction.

Bill Grace

Why The World Fears Us As In United States

I was shocked when that distant colleague told me
That the world fears the United States
That conversation at least two if not three wars ago
But I think I understand better the comment today
It is because of the other theology that sleeps in bed with us.
It is the theology of 'more' - of having more than so many -
We still do not have enough.
It is Lyndon Johnson saying with great passion:
'There is NOTHING the United States can not do.'

Bill Grace

Why We Can Not Have It All

Robert Bella taught me and a full lecture hall
Why we can not have it all
Back to Homer as a model and things profoundly disturbed
So far from Socrates and discourse and knowing self
We all want it all but we can not have it all
To act on visions from deep hubris is unbalance and death.

Bill Grace

Wife's Rose As A Vector Of Love Around Aunt Ruth's Vase

At 'Sans Souci' I witnessed
A fresh rose upon Frederick's grave
That made tremendous impression
It seeming not to be an act of official care,
This thing of roses and love holding an abiding attraction.

So, to this line's creation
I have your ancient bud vase of slender neck - once elegant -
Faux silver finish now intimating pewter
With luck at a good garage sale
It might fetch a dollar or even two.

To me it is a treasure
Worth more than its cost to hold
Loaded this evening with a fresh rose
As with all matters of great love
As a vector of love I do not know
If that rose is a rose
That lives from or for you
Though you are long gone from view.

Bill Grace

Winter Air Travel

The clouds over Atlanta
Dark and angry
Foretell the coming storm.

Bill Grace

Winter Respite In Texas

Yellow sunlight
fires
the grass
to a bed
of emerald green
glass,

Gnats spinning
fly
in molecule formations

young children play
with their wiener dog

the Grandmother speaks

silence

a comfortable bench

a passing car

a Winter's respite in Texas.

Bill Grace

Wisdom Of Henry Nouwen

Hopefully these words capture his spirit
We are only a small part
but we are still important.

Bill Grace

Wisdom Of Henry Nouwen Made Simple

Hopefully this captures his spirit:

We are only a small part
but we are still important.

Bill Grace

With Appreciation For A Martin Espada Poem

Reading good poets
makes me want
to be a good poet.
The good poets
reach across time and space
and touch the
soul within us.
I may just have
a toilet plunger
stuck to the center
of my forehead,
but someday
I will make unicorn.
Perhaps some day
I will be
a good poet.

Bill Grace

With Love Hazard Is Made

With love the hazard is made
A thousand things its object
A legion of holes in chain armor
Worn by countless seas
Even a sword its confusing vector
With love hazard is made.

Bill Grace

Without Signature

Jean Cluett knew the great secret
That we engrave on each others hearts
With words only casually spoken
So, - being wise and gracious - she was kind.

Clue told me of the first chapbook
She did not believe it probably held any great poetry
And probably she is correct given life's great capacity
To reclaim and reconstruct without signature.

Bill Grace

Word Craters

The trouble with being called 'Colonel'
Or almost anything else either good or bad
Is after the thousandth occurrence
You start to believe it.

Bill Grace

Word In The Morning

With garbage out and night lights off
But before the morning symphony
I try for a greater majesty
Where reins the silence of the day
(The strike of mantle clock withstanding)
And through which God speaks
A vector quiet as these lines.

Bill Grace

Word Shock

At breakfast with friend of deep degree
Our waitress of great beauty and work energy
We spoke of Maughan and Hemingway and literary styles
of present and of past
In illustrating the power of contemporary thrust
The pejorative "wench" surfaced in our talk
I said nothing but was shocked
Her care of us at table superb
My heart towards her had more than a little locked,
And "wench" or no to me she was not.

Bill Grace

Word Synchronicity Event The First Day

I asked my wife
If she knew the word
Her no
Sent me flying
To the dictionary
Page after page
Ever more eagerly
I pursued my prey
Hiding
Between scum and scummy
YES!
"Scumbled"
The word exists
Chris Forhan
Has not made it up.

Bill Grace

Word Synchronicity Event The Second Day

The visit to the restaurant
Has enlarged vocabulary
Taken to a well known phenomenon
Previously without word
The 24 hour breakfast availability
Is now known as
"Brinner"
The fusion of morning's food with dinner
Courtesy of some marketing genius
Who helps us lesser types see
Expanded potentials for an omelet.

Bill Grace

Word Tones #1

Silence of a great city
In a small kitchen
The kitten nips at bare toes
The old cat tumbles the kitten
Cold milk with peanut butter cookies
Charlie Rose over
The refrigerator hums
Ink goes to paper smoothly.

Bill Grace

Words

Words that buzz through my head
Words my eyes behold
Only sex and ties of love more powerful
Only God more present
Something about a Christ not seen
Implanted by a community of love long gone.

Bill Grace

Words After A Sick Room Visit

The well, the strong,
Will never understand the sick, the broken,
Till the Great Deomocrat comes.
It is easy to pretend that we do not hear the cold wind
because it is not felt upon our necks.
Still the sound persists
Though reality denies sight its form.

To summon energy to fight or to surrender,
I would not judge the cause.
But even in defeat this earth can be sweet
And leaving it no easy task.

Bill Grace

Words For Sergeant Dakota Meyer, Usmc – Cmh

Someday when your construction job has helped you heal
I hope through google and the further mystery of the internet
These words will find you
The President did not speak falsely
In your dark valley you are far from alone
Your comrades - living and dead – are not alone
Indeed a nation grieves with you
Your truth is proofed
Your honor is secure
You are not alone
You are not alone
The medal is our grief
It is not your grief
Keep your grief – keep your grief
It will heal you
It will heal you
Keep your grief
The Medal is a souvenir from a place
Where there are no shops

Bill Grace

Words Inspired By The Life Of Chaplain Lyle Von Seggern (**** Density Level)

At Edison's great fire
He called his wife as witness
To pastel pillar twists of chemically fed flames
That could have destroyed both work and life
Of a less centered man.

Edison wore God's armor.

Our home has seen candescent storm enough
That turns earth's dome to shattering white
Yielding originalites of lightning that teach of fright
This gospel is well written and established that
We know beyond our capacity to understand.

In legion ways we still struggle
with an ancient central foe called fear
This thing that never pierced the great inventor's heart
And teaches us in crucible a central truth of spirit
Not even flame is strong enough to singe the hem of love.

Bill Grace

Workman Coffee

At the working man's restaurant
I don't think they care
if you bring your coffee in.
The polite civilities
are not necessarily binding.
Good coffee is not to be wasted.
Just remember
the carafe on the table
is not yours
despite
where it sits.

Bill Grace

Worshipping With Deer

The dome's vault blue
is clear,
Chicken Little is out of a job.
The acolytes come
softly floating from distant woods
across fields -
dog asks if there is some mistake -
thirty come to worship
minus three fawns
without one bell to call.

Light fades
the last hikers
retreat from the trails
even aircraft
passing overhead
seem muted.

The great cathedral
is deserted and silent
God listens
and from my butane lighter
a holy fire burns
as candles are not lit.

Bill Grace

Worthy Quote And Life Goal

'Together, you and John taught us that a good life is built not on a single historic act or multiple acts of heroism but in a thousand little things. A thousand little things have built character. Treating everyone with dignity and respect.'

Bill Grace

Writing Poetry In A Walmart Parking Lot

The issue does not seem to be dinner,
perhaps my daughter will know
where we should go to eat.

Mom is at a board meeting
trying to keep our little church
from self destruction.

This temple
holds the truth
of the power of stuff.
Words will never touch it
even the Gospels
calling us to Christ
are almost mute
before its power
and another
unseemly truth,
besides the cross,
that this planet holds.

Bill Grace

Writing Poetry Late At Night After My Wife's Cancer Surgery Exam

"The Paris Review" holds treasures.
I start by reading others.
Hanging Loose Press was discovered tonight.
These words will never be published.
Sometimes life is simply too much work.

Bill Grace

Wwjd

He would read the Psalms.

He would read the Prophets especially Isaiah.

He would keep God at the center of his life.

He would quietly and continuously heal.

He would be unobserved and unknown.

He would be beyond the marks of gender.

His sex would be an accident.

He would be a friend to Gandhi in his early London days or Mother Theresa before her BBC debut.

He might well be quietly living next door with enormous spiritual store.

He could be a Democrat or a Republican, conservative or liberal.

In short we will have to know him to know what he will have us do.

Bill Grace

X And Y

I desperately wanted to do X
But felt the pull of Y
Wrath of wife
Disappointment of daughter
X's questionable propriety
Secretly tell why
I did not try.

We are always pulled
Between X and Y
- sometimes Z & W
as well -
You supply the values
for the variables
I'll supply life's drive.

In this dilemma
A good friend
A good counselor will help
A touch of Praeto's instinct
to find the vital percent
A touch of luck
Perhaps God's grace
I'm always struggling to balance
X and Y.

Bill Grace

Young Breasts Ageing

Half century or so ago she wanted to be an architect,
I wanted to be President

Bright sun, an invitation to massage, she was a strawberry blond with the clear
skin and the private room.

We slept together once but it is well we did not marry
She could not tolerate the snoring of a courtship night
Let alone the pressures that would have come from a maverick's life.

She has gone on to greater things than death defying buildings
And just as I have lost my hair I can not help but think
Of the young woman who favored me once
With the beauty of those young breasts now ageing
Who I am protective of to this very line.

Bill Grace

Young Child Shoots Her Deer

My central Adirondack brother
tells me of his granddaughter's
first deer.

How after she had killed him
she stroked the still animal
and assured its soul
that he was still her deer.

How strange this tale seems
now that I live
in evening dusks among them
Even the dog's fast moves
upset tranquility.

They are at dusk
my deer too
gun at home
I shoot my pen
the bullets - words
that mark this spot.

Bill Grace

Young Idol Fallen

She was this old man's idol
This beautiful young teenager
Who worked at journaling and Yoga and picking pumpkins
To earn her privileged ski trips
Who could be entrusted with my house
Object of fantasy.
So the shock was not her Mother's alone
When she shred Mom's face in rage
And revealed something very deep within
Far different than the beauties I had observed
This thing known as sin.

Bill Grace

Young Man Selling At My Door

The young man coming to my door with the preposterous offer
Is painful not for the visitation
Rather, memory of my own youth - its optimism and naivete.
The sort of thing that makes you think
That a bottle of detergent can conquer the world
And does, until you meet it.

Bill Grace

Youth Advice In Four Stanzas

Become a reader as fast as you can.
The stuff that will change your life
The stuff that will strengthen you
(Even with out your knowing you are being strengthened)
Is in print some way
Become a reader as fast as you can.

Eat fruit. When choice is available choose
Protein over carbohydrate and carbohydrate over fat.

Listen to those who are older than you
Who do not want either your money or time
Fifteen years difference can be nice.

If you have some money always keep some money.

Bill Grace