

Classic Poetry Series

Frank V. Gardner

- poems -

Publication Date:

2012

Publisher:

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

(56 pages,32 typewritten poems, with some newspaper clippings and other supporting documentation, hastily assembled for family Christmas gifts that year by Frank, Nancy, and other siblings.)

Musings in Iambic Meter 1993

(40 pages: Mostly, the same 32 poems, computer produced without the previous extraneous documents.)

The Walshes of Burgundy 1993

(68 pages: Computer Produced and family assembled: The story, as mother told it, of my great grandparents, Thomas and Mary Walsh, traveling from Ireland in the 1840s to New York; finally in 1869 to Burgundy Plantation in Fairfax County, Virginia. This included some independent research.)

The Bruen and Gardner Families 1994

(75 pages: Computer produced and family assembled: The story, as mother told it, of the Walshes and Bruens from Ireland, her marriage to my father after The Great War, my life story and marriage to Geraldine Donahue.)

With Six Marine Divisions: Across the Central Pacific 1995

(134 pages of black-on-white print: My World War Two experiences, with research. Family proofread and assembled.)

Marine Air Support One.... of World War II 1999

(The same war experiences and research as in the 1995 book, with 68 illustrations added, including photos, maps, and charts, some in color. The pages increased from 134 to 198. Family proofread and assembled,)

(These seven works were self published.)

Body Man, a Special Breed

The body man is in a job
That he's been in for years.
He gets it done, as they all do,
With muscle, sweat.... and beers.

Well, first he checks the damage done,
And tallies up the count;
Then writes it down and shows us how
It dents our bank account.

The craftsman, the mechanic,
And the artist do their thing.
The painter sprays and touches up
The job with coloring.

Each one will set his private pride
On everything he does.
In answer to my question, 'Why? '
He shrugs, ' Well, just because.'

But, what he will return to us,
From several days in shop,
Puts us on the road again,
Feeling back on top.

We thank them for artistic work....
They are a special breed....
For they can do some magic things,
In answer to our need.

Yes, they endure the hassles....
Braving sweat.... and toil.... and heat,
So cars that we might drive again
Will look so ever sweet!

(Written while I observed and appreciated work done at an auto body shop on multiple cars in August 1982 in McLean, Virginia while I waited for work to be completed on my car due to a minor fender bender.)

Frank V. Gardner

Chain of Thirty Three and Bracelet of Nine

Eight years ago in old New York,
I found a special shop
With silver things from Argentina;
Quality, the top.

I bought a silver necklace there,
With links of twenty five,
To mark that anniversary,
Our married love, alive.

I was assigned to Argentina
Some ten months ago.
We thought of adding to the necklace,
Since we liked it so.

We found an expert jeweler here,
And Sellar was his name.
He thought that he could find eight silver
Links made just the same.

Well, twenty five and eight, you see,
Add up to thirty three,
Which this year marks our married love,
In anniversary.

But eight links didn't seem enough
To make it worth his while,
As Gerry felt a bracelet
Might make old Sellar smile.

So, Frank then ordered nine more links
Of silver in a chain,
To represent our children and
Configured just the the same.

Now, Gerry has a matching set,
That suits her mighty fine:
The necklace chain of thirty three,
And bracelet of nine.

(For our thirty-third wedding anniversary, April 21,1984, Buenos Aires, Argentina.)

Frank V. Gardner

Chain of Twenty Five

Another year has passed, my love,
And now it's twenty five:
The total years our marriage has
Been true, and been alive.

We've moved a dozen times in all,
And shared good times with bad.
We've traveled many thousand miles.
Adventures, we have had.

Nine children have been born to us,
And one grandchild, as well.
We're in McLean three years by now.
It seems like quite a spell.

My job has separated us
Each year from time to time.
Let's hope New York will be the last
Occasion for such rhyme.

Last year it was Geneva,
With the work on Law of Sea,
That kept the miles between us
On our anniversary.

This year that same old group is in
New York, and so am I;
But 'ere this day is over,
I'll be with you, at your side.

With this in mind, I went to find,
And found a silver chain,
With twenty-five connecting links;
To us they appertain.

One link, each year that we have lived,
Together, hand in hand.
Those links to mark the lives we've shared,
As, side by side, we stand.

It's silver, and it's twenty five.
It marks our years of love.
So, wear it well. We give our thanks
To Father up above.

Frank V. Gardner

Come Home. Danny

The day that Danny went away
He didn't make a fuss.
It was the second day of May....
He left a note for us.

It said he'd join us later on....
He wanted better life.
God knows we tried before he left,
Despite some family strife.

But off he went, with nothing but
The clothing that he wore.
A friend who saw him headed north,
Reported nothing more.

Where did he go? What could he do?
A fifteen-year-old boy....
A letter or a phone call would
Just fill our hearts with joy.

But we must sit and wonder as
We hope and pray for him,
While he is out there all alone
In answer to his whim.

This quiet plea is in our hearts
With every passing night:
'Come home to us now, Danny boy,
Let's try to make things right.'

God help and guide you, Danny boy,
And bring you home to stay.
Then we'll forget that day in May....
When you just walked away.

(Written on May 19,1972, in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico.)

Frank V. Gardner

Danny's Home Again

Our Danny came back home to us
By Greyhound bus today.
The count of days was forty-six
Since when he went away.

He thumbed a ride to San Antone,
And hopped a freight from there.
He didn't have the wherewithal
To pay the travel fare.

In Granite City, Illinois,
He loaded railroad ties,
While learning pay is just reward
He gets because he tries.

He thought he'd work the summer,
But then he heard our plea,
Through one Salvation Army man,
Who read my poetry.

And so, he climbed aboard a bus,
He paid his fare, and then....
He came back to the border
And his family once again.

Now Danny's back, and we'll have our
United family,
With love, cooperation.... and
Some quiet harmony.

(Written on June 17,1972, in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico.)

Frank V. Gardner

Do the Best You Can

The world around us doesn't wait for us to make a mark;
For waiting is so futile when we have so little spark.
So many do the waiting as they watch the world go by;
Too many sit and wonder how the mountains meet the sky.

It's those who climb the mountain, even those who leave the ground,
Who find that, in so doing, simple answers may be found.
The ones who show their fellow man the way good things are done,
May not make easy money, but they're good at having fun.

Let's get up off our haunches! Do our thing, though it be small;
It's better late or little.... than to not have tried at all.
The least of us can make a mark upon our fellow man....
And on the world around us.... when we do the best we can.

(I wrote this at the Department of State while applying to enter the Foreign Service,
Washington, D. C.,1964.)

Frank V. Gardner

Father I Hardly Knew

My father, who I hardly knew,
Was never one to shirk.
He died in nineteen twenty four,
While helping friends at work.

He came from Colorado,
Where the men were taught to ride.
He joined the Army Engineers,
And did the job with pride.

At first, he went to Texas,
Where he joined a border fight,
Controlling Pancho Villa;
And the Army did it right.

When more important war developed,
Far across the sea,
He went to France in World War One
To battle Germany.

When peace was won, he married young,
And started family.
But long and healthy life for him
Just wasn't meant to be.

A good mechanic, then, he was;
'Sixteenth and L, ' his base.
'A place for everything, ' he'd say,
'And everything in place.'

While helping string a high antenna,
From the shop, outside,
A rotted window sill gave way.
He fell.
That's how he died.

(Mother told her three children about their father as they grew up.
I wrote this poem about him in Falls Church, Virginia, during October 1985.)

Frank V. Gardner

FBI Director Hoover - The Man

J. Edgar Hoover was a man
Who had a job to do.
He did it well; yes, even though
His critics were some few.

He started out against the odds
Four dozen years ago.
He volunteered, and persevered
To make 'the Bureau' go.

He fostered in his people
The ideal of dedication;
And we responded to the task
With 'Hoover emulation.'

In probing, good reporting, as
We sifted evidence,
We followed his example,
While we aimed for excellence.

At crime and communism,
Mr. Hoover took a stand.
We agents fought the fight with him,
And labeled him: 'the man.'

So, on this day of eulogies,
The Bureau's flag stays flying high,
To mark his finest tribute:
That he built the F.B.I.

(Written in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas,
Mexico, on May 4, 1972, the day following
Director Hoover's death in Washington, D. C.)

Frank V. Gardner

Gardner Seven Teens

In spring when buds are popping,
And the leaves are showing green,
Who could enjoy it better than
A girl of seventeen.

Just like the robin and the wren,
Who chirp, and primp, and preen,
Results are even nicer in
A girl of seventeen.

Young men admire adoringly,
Agreeing she is keen,
While seeking the approval of
The girl of seventeen.

The one who takes her to the prom
Believes he has a queen!
And, you know what? He really has....
That girl of seventeen.

To Gerry, let us give three cheers!
We know that she has been
The mother of our charming ones:
The Gardner seven 'teens. '

Frank V. Gardner

Gerry's Paintings on the Wall

On Echols Street in Sixty Three
There was some 'painting' done,
And those who did that painting
Said it was a lot of fun.

For Gerry, it was more like 'work: '
To paint walls in her house.
Her husband joined to help her,
For, if not, he'd be a 'louse.'

Two friends on Echols Street then learned
That Gerry had a wall:
So big.... and clean.... and empty,
But, no art to hang at all.

They felt, 'in her condition, '
She could not go shopping much...
For paintings, pictures, ornaments:
Those things we hang, and such.

They got the idea that
They 'really' could 'paint' too,
To help the situation,
And to show they were 'true blue.'

With canvass, brushes, oils,
And their lovely color schemes,
They set to work, each striving
To produce a pleasant scene.

That they succeeded.... well, just look:
Upon that grateful wall:
Where Gerry hung those paintings up,
Without a strain at all.

So, Charlotte's peaceful street at dusk,
And Peggy's basket bright,
Are blended in a nice effect,
A true aesthetic sight.

The Gardners have some culture now....
That's not the only part;
The paintings show that.... best of all....
Those gifts are from the heart.

(Written in recognition of two paintings, one each given to Gerry
by our good neighbors, Charlotte O'Hara and Peggy Youngblood in Vienna, Virginia,
during September 1963.)

Frank V. Gardner

Halloween Game

October ends up with a game.
Each year things happen much the same.
Some ghosts and goblins may be seen,...
Around about on Halloween.

It's really kids dressed up like that:
Some tall and thin, some short and fat;
They go to homes near where they live
To ask the occupants to give.

The game is played by all in fun,...
By light of moon, not of the sun.
The kids won't trick,...
Or scare,...
Or 'beat'....
If they receive a little treat.

(At daughter, Nancy's request, during breakfast on October 25,1972, I wrote this poem for her to recite at school that day in Vienna, Virginia.)

Frank V. Gardner

He Knows What He's Doing

One day in March, my little girl and I had lunch together.
We looked outside, across the lawn, and talked about the weather.
The wind was strong; the cedar trees were in its billows dancing.
The clouds were moving swiftly by; the scene was quite entrancing.

'Look, daddy, 'Maureen said to me, 'how hard the wind is blowing!
I betcha on a colder day, that blowing would be snowing!
And what is it keeps yonder rocks from leaving where they're staying,
While, overhead, those cedar trees are back-and-forward swaying? '

'It's gravity, 'I said, a force by which our God is proving
That He can make those rocks stay put, while flimsy things are moving.'
We also spoke of nature: how it helps God keeping order.
Then I could see impressions being made upon my daughter.

We even spoke of when our God receives us into heaven.
I told her she would understand that more at age of seven.
She squinted up where clouds, and sky, and shapes were interchanging....
I wondered in what areas her 'childish' mind was ranging.

'Those holes up in the sky', she said, 'I hope have bottoms to them.
How else would God be able to keep us from falling through them? '
'Our God, ' I said, 'has loving hands; he'd hold us very gently;
He wouldn't let us fall at all.' She looked at me intently.

Then, I could tell, her 'growing' mind had something in it brewing.
She thought.... and smiled....
And reconciled:
'Well, He know what He doing! '

(I had this conversation in 1959 with my pre-school
daughter, Maureen, who was almost six at the time.
The poem was written a few years later,
January 1965, in Vienna, Virginia.)

Frank V. Gardner

Iambic Tetrameter and Me

Today, I sat me down to ponder
Why I write like this:
Four metric feet, first line of text,
And three feet in the next.
This sing-song meter ambles on
From line to line, and then,
A rhyme is put, delightfully,
To have the stanza end.

From where the rhythm and the style?
From where I caught the rhyme?
I thought back to my schooling days,
And poem-reading time.

Ancient Mariner is one
That I remember well:
Its rhyme and rhythm still come through,
As clearly as a bell:

Then, Shakespeare and the other greats,
Who wrote iambic lines,
Influenced me so subtly,
Their style, my pen defines.

'America the Beautiful'
Has meter, style, and grace;
And most of us are wondered by
Its thoughtful, moving pace.
This four-feet, three-feet meter fits
So well in verse or song,
We memorize it easily
And sense it when it's wrong.

It's this bound verse that captured me,
Poetic pen and all:
It's why I write iambic lines,
And have myself a ball.

This iambic tetrameter,
Trimeter in line two:
I write it for the pleasure
And enjoyment given you,,,,
And me!

Frank V. Gardner

Iwo Jima: Why and How

Discussing the Pacific War, a student asked of me,
"Why take so small an island, isolated, far at sea? "
I told the class what we had done; it jogged my memory.
At home, I wrote that epic down in verse and poetry.

We had to capture Iwo Jima, killing most its men.
No other way could it be done, from landing to the end.
It's how I answer inquiries, some sixty years 'tis now;
And every time I speak of it, I'm wondered by the "how."

With twenty thousand Japanese, perhaps two thousand more,
The enemy on Iwo was prepared to fight a war.
They knew that we were coming, and they dug emplacements well
To make that island fortress be a place of living hell.

They tunneled deep beneath the rock and black volcanic sand;
The deepest excavation had been made for high command.
With no civilians, stubby trees, and weather slightly cold,
That five-mile heap of blackened ash was not much to behold.

Why'd such an ugly island an attraction for us be?
Its military airfields: not just one, or two, but three!

The nineteenth day of February barely saw the sun,
As warships, in support of landing, fired every gun.
When that barrage had lifted and our planes began to soar,
Those landing craft, with brave Marines, went rushing to the shore.

The enemy artillery responded with a roar!
It ripped, and tore, and shattered us, heads down against the shore.
Volcanic ash got soaked with blood; we had no place to hide!
So, move ahead is what we did, with pain.... and "Semper Pride."

By nightfall we had cut across the shortest neck of land:
Two thousand men, our dead and wounded, scattered on the sand.
The next three days we fought them, both in front and to the rear.
But, February twenty-third, a welcome sight we had to cheer:

Five-hundred-foot Mount Suribachi, highest ground there'd be,
Was captured and our flag was raised for all Marines to see.
It was a most dramatic moment; but did it mean that we
Had won the total island from the enemy?

No, for bitter war continued on the battlefield below;
Such fierce resistance plaguing us: another month to go.
About that time, to fill a gap, give landing troops a lift,
The Third Marine Division came ashore to join the Fourth and Fifth.

And now, with three Marine divisions lined up to the north,
The enemy began to feel our might as we moved forth.
With two thirds of the island left; and they, entrenched uphill,
Surrender wasn't in their plan: More blood would have to spill.

No matter what we threw at them, resistance was so hard,
Each day's advances had to be just measured by the yard.
Marines were falling left and right, but we could still give thanks,
As battlefield replacements joined our now-depleted ranks.

The enemy was losing more as we pursued for days,
Relentlessly attacking in varieties of ways:
We called in air support - so close that we could feel the heat,
When flaming napalm dropped ahead of us, three hundred feet.

We burned them out; we sealed their caves; we fought them hand to hand!
On March the fourth, a big B-29 came in to land.
In five months some two thousand more such rescues would be made;
Each ten-man crew of Army fliers, grateful to be saved.

The rate that men on Iwo fell was one for every minute.
Presented graphically, there's yet another way to put it:
When seven men would fall, 'twas like a seven-minute scene:
One dead was ours, three dead were theirs, three wounded were Marine.
In general, fighting took four weeks; some units, more like five.
Yes, we survivors, boarding ship, thanked God to be alive.

The only victory where we had total losses more than they.
All casualties, by fallen thousands, unbelievable to say:
Their dead, in thousands: twenty one; and ours: six thousand, not alive.
The total of our dead and wounded, in the thousands: twenty five.

It was our only victory where we had losses more than they;
All casualties, by fallen thousands, unbelievable to say:
Their dead, in thousands: twenty one; and ours: six thousand, not alive.
The total of our dead and wounded, in the thousands: twenty five.

We men of Iwo reminisce, some sixty years 'tis now:
Of lost Marines - no tougher fight - we know the 'why, " the 'how.'

~~~~~  
~~~~~

Staff Sergeant Frank V. Gardner of Marine Air Support Control Unit One, a radio operator for close air support to the three Marine divisions of the Fifth Amphibious Corps. on Iwo Jima.

Copyright 1987 / Copyright 2010

Frank V. Gardner

John Kennedy, Eternal Rest

The day John Kennedy was shot,
He bowed his wounded head...
His wife embraced him frantically,
Her lap, a martyr's bed.
Within the hour he was gone....
She kissed a last good-bye.
A world in dismal disbelief
Was heard, softly, to cry.

The final sacrifice she offered
Was her wedding band...
She took it from her finger,
And placed it in his hand.
So, thus began the journey home
For freedom's leader, slain....
Two children there would never see
Their dad alive again.

As line of march began to form,
With caisson, flag, and band,
His little girl brushed back a tear,
And held her mother's hand.
His little boy, three years that day,
Then gave one last salute,
As widow, throng, and nations joined
In wonderful tribute.

A million mourners lined the road;
And whispered last farewells,
As millions more around the world
Would hear the tolling bells.
His grave is 'cross the river now,
On Arlington's hillside,
Where burns a soft 'eternal flame, '
A symbol of our pride.

The crowds go there to meditate
On how they loved him best,
To pray that his immortal soul
May have eternal rest.

(Written at my home in Vienna, Virginia,
during the four days we mourned
President Kennedy's tragic death in November 1963.)

Frank V. Gardner

Joseph Julian, Marine Corps Legend

One Joseph 'Rudy' Julian,
A World War Two Marine,
Was killed on Iwo Jima in a
A most heroic scene.

On Iwo Jima, forty-five,
Where three Marine Divisions fought,
The enemy vowed kill ten of us
Before each being caught.

The nineteenth day of battle loomed
As Joe went on ahead.
His men were told to cover him:
The last thing he had said.
Because they were receiving fire
From several cliff-side caves,
Their chief went forward, covered by
The firing from his braves.

For three full hours he stayed out front
With weapons for the job:
Bazooka; rifle.... and grenades
He knew just how to lob.
He knocked out six of their positions
For his men's advance;
He was about to signal them,
But never got the chance.

A well concealed machine gun fired
And struck him in the chest!
His death was instantaneous;
His men had lost their best.
Platoon Sergeant Joseph Julian,
Marine Corps legend now:
He didn't order men out front;
He simply showed them how.

Frank V. Gardner

Let Us Join the Town

We're separated by the creek!
Frustrated by the pike!
We're cut off from the town in ways
No one of you would like!

A bridge will straddle Wolftrap Run
At Echols Street some day,
Instead of what we're using now:
that 'Pedestrian causeway'.

The Council says it wants a bridge,
So, please do not relent;
The more you wait, the more the chance
Of greater accident.

We've had a few already,
Though not serious they were,
The child who toppled in the creek
More likely was a 'her.'

A worse condition, though, exists
At Maple Avenue,
Where cars from here, and cars from there,
Are put in quite a stew.

Let's end the jam at Maple,
And not have to go around.
Solution is to build the bridge,
And let us join the town.

Frank V. Gardner

Mexico Farewell

Six years we've lived in Mexico,
And now it's time to go.
We're headed back to Washington,
Where winter brings the snow.

The winters here are warmer though;
In Juarez it was dry.
Sonora baked in sunlight,
Under blue and open sky.

But, if we wanted weather,
We would not have made a bet
That New Laredo was a place
To be so drippy wet.

Aside from weather, there are
Many things to talk about:
That we have learned your 'español, '
We don't think there's a doubt.

We like your food, we sing your songs,
Of course, your dances, too.
Your beauty has rubbed off on us,
The way good cultures do.

We'll take these things back home with us,
To use them when we can....
And tell them tales of Mexico,
Its people, and its land.

The people and the land,
Oh, how inseparable they are.
The people's love of 'patria'
Is like a shining star.

Of all the things we think about,
As our time here now ends,
The things we cherish most of all
Are having you as friends.

To Mexico, a fond farewell.
To friends, our gratitude,
For making these six years with you
A pleasant interlude.

(Recited to our friends at a farewell dinner,
'La comida de despedida, ' on June 24, 1972,
in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico.)

Frank V. Gardner

Mother's Day with Microwave

This early morn I woke befuddled; .
Came downstairs to write
These thoughts that in my mind were muddled
Through the stormy night.
It's been two weeks since I've come home
From hernia repair,
To spend so many healing hours
In this reclining chair.

As I recline and think of how
In 'gifting' we have scored,
To mark this anniversary,
We both went overboard.
There's no use beating 'round the bush.
I'll tell it to you straight.
The two of us spent much too much
On this, our twenty eighth.

Reclining chair and oven,
Both expensive, but so good;
One's for recuperation,
While the other fixes food.
I gather thoughts to write,
This rainy Mother's Day,
Reclining here so easily,
Here's what I have to say:

Homemaker that you are once more,
Just how will you behave,
With recipes and cooking,
In your oven, microwave?
The family and I agree.
We think that you will save,
On time, as well as money,
With your oven, microwave.

With money now so limited,
I've something else to say:
I trust the oven, microwave,
Will serve for Mother's Day.

Since 'tit for tat' is only fair,
I've one more thing to say:
I'm willing to accept the chair,
To honor Father's Day.

Frank V. Gardner

Nancy's Life to Save

When Nancy was a tiny tot
She sank beneath a wave.
Her family gathered on the spot,
Her precious life to save.

We dragged her from the water,
As her skin was turning blue.
We prayed to God, that with His help,
We'd know just what to do.

When mouth-to-mouth resuscitation
Wouldn't do the job,
Her daddy switched to 'pressure prone.'
At length, we heard her sob.

She coughed, and cried,,,, and then the color
Came back to her face,
As we, and others gathered there,
Praised God around that place.

And now, some twenty years gone by,
Our Nancy, once again,
Is stifled by some troubling things
So hard to comprehend.

We pray our adult Nancy will
Join with her family,
To save her life, and persevere,
With love and dignity.

(When she was two-and-a-half years old,
Nancy 's family saved her from drowning
in El Paso, Texas, in 1966.)

(This poem was written on October 22,1987.)

(Nancy died, tragically, in Virginia,1990.)

Frank V. Gardner

Not any other Landing Force

They called us Landing Force, Air Support
Control Unit One:
Marines who knew the difference 'tween
A rifle and a gun.
We specialized in radio,
Some radar business too.
To dig ourselves in better,
Had our own construction crew

We could build our team a CIC;
That's done in no time flat.
Our pilots on the ground with us
Advised those in the air
Just how to hit their targets best;
They were so good at that.

At Miramar we trained,
And went ashore at Coronado,
To practice beach-head landings,
Where United States Marines go.

From there, eight score of us
Proceeded west by ocean trips,
To land on far off islands
From nine oceangoing ships.

We hit the beach at Saipan as
Our first encounter then,
And on that tragic island we
Would lose two of our men.

We gave air warning to our troops,
As fighting raged around.
We shed our blood, we mourned our dead,
Amid the battle sound.

In four weeks we secured Saipan;
Our unit first to leave,
With fifteen hundred prisoners
Hawaii would receive.

Because the need for 'quick air warning'
Now was overcome,
Four dozen of us went to
'Air Support, ' as 'Unit One.'

As Landing Force, Air Support
Control Unit One,
We got to Honolulu, where
We had a bit of fun.

The next place we assaulted

Was for 'aviation' sake,
Where three Marine divisions had
Those three airfields to take.

'Twas living hell on Iwo Jima's
Black, volcanic sand;
But 'ere that battle finished
We received a new command.
We joined a huge armada
That was headed westerly:
Twelve hundred ships, the greatest
Ocean fleet in history.

On Okinawa we were met with
Hide-and-seeker tactics,
While Navy guns were shooting down
Young Japanese fanatics.
As kamikazes struck our fleet,
And sunk three dozen ships,
We 'grunts' ashore were searching out
A hundred thousand Nips.

That slaughter lasted eighty days,
And would you still believe:
The Forty Eight of Unit One,
Again, the first to leave?

We made it home for Christmas, yes,
For all we had been through.
To say our unit was unique,
I don't mind telling you.

So, what's the point in all of this?
What's this telling for at all?
Well, those three island battles were
The bloodiest of all.

Not any other landing force
Could claim what we had done:
Hit Saipan.... Iwo.... Okinawa:
We, the only one!

Saipan: June and July - 1944
Iwo Jima: February and March - 1945
Okinawa: April, May, and June - 1945

(Written during July 1985, in Falls Church, Virginia, 20 years after the war ended.)

Frank V. Gardner

Pope John, Ecumenical Man

Pope John is dead! The crowds go home,
Their vigil's over now;
Their prayers continue for the man
Who simply showed them how.

'Pope John is dead, ' the headlines say,
The man who loved us all,
He prayed that one day we might
All be ecumenical.

Pope John is dead, and may he rest
In heaven's holy place,
Where one day all the world will join
In one angelic race.

Pope John is dead. Our hearts are sad,
For we have lost a friend;
He gave us inspiration, yes,
Right up until the end.

Pope John is dead; God rest his soul,
But there's no need to cry:
He taught us how to live with love...
And showed us how to die.

Frank V. Gardner

Rest Assured, John Kennedy

The years have passed since Kennedy...
With heartache, war, and strife....
How would it be if, only,
He had not then lost his life?

As President, he gave us hope....
And purpose to pursue....
He challenged us, and asked:
What, for our country, we might do?

Vietnam has ended, strife is less;
And heartache's almost gone.
But, still we need exemplify
The right, and not the wrong.

Yet, we'll protect this land we love,
Despite what has been shown....
Did he not say that, 'here on earth,
God's work must be our own? '

So, rest assured, John Kennedy,
America lives on!
God grant it may continue thus....
Long after we are gone.

Frank V. Gardner

Retiring for Final Writings

There's got to be another poem;
Perhaps a book or two.
I have ideas for writing them
By then I should be through.

In March 2003, Gerry and I moved into a retirement community, where I am working on my next poem.

Frank V. Gardner

Sanctification of Love

Those lovers, young, may think they know,
But they won't know the score,
Until they're married twenty years,
And then they add some more.

Some lovers must experiment
On ways that 'sex is best; '
But practicing eroticism
Doesn't meet the test.

The thing they need to learn is that
Good sex is tied to love;
And love is the ingredient
There is too little of.

With love they'd learn the meaning of
The many ways to give,
The many ways successful lovers
Learn to love and live.

Some lovers suffer setbacks when,
In early years, they learn
They don't experience true pleasure,
Just because they yearn.

They've got to work for each success,
For each good year; and then
They'll put it all together,
So that each will comprehend.

The ways they understand are those
True lovers learn with tears:
That bodies, hearts, and minds.... and sex....
Mature throughout the years.

So, cling together lovers, young,
But learn this lesson, true:
Be true to each.... your love will grow....
And sanctify the two.

(Written shortly after my 24th wedding anniversary in May 1975, Geneva, Switzerland)

Frank V. Gardner

The Walshes Came to Burgundy

Some hundred fifty years ago
A young man left his home;
Good-bye to hills of Ireland,
To make it on his own.
At age eighteen, he had no fear
To cross the ocean wide,
Although he made the trip alone,
With no one by his side.

His storm-tossed ship went off its course,
So, Boston was its end.
He went ashore, with Irish luck,
And found himself a friend.
His benefactor sheltered him
And taught him all he knew.
Young Thomas Walsh was learning
All the things good tradesmen do.

His 'Irish luck' continued,
As he made another move
To New York City's busy streets,
With more success to prove.
'Twas there he found an Irish lass,
Who came from over there.
They wed, and started family,
With tender loving care.

Two decades later, Walshes were
Back on the move again:
Two hundred thirty miles down south,
By rolling railroad train.

The lovely house of Burgundy
Was their Virginia home.
From there the Walshes, Tom and Mary,
Never more would roam.

Frank V. Gardner

They Fly Away in Disarray

For anything we ever did
That ever beat the band,
'Twas chasing off those pigeons
From the 'residence' so grand.

The house of our ambassador,
So stately standing there,
Has no more pesky pigeons!
They have taken to the air.

A humble place it never was,
Today it's also clean
Because the roosting pigeons now
Are hardly ever seen.

We've put a system into place,
Designed a special way,
That's been completely tested
And built it is to stay.

The ledges and the cornices
Are clean as they can be,
While pigeons fly in disarray
To other canopy.

No longer do they roost and 'drop, '
Or inconvenience us.
They fly away to places where
The 'other people' cuss.

Frank V. Gardner

This Time, You Come to Me

All through our lovely married life
I've had to go away.
And it was always you, my dear,
Who was back home to stay.

It wasn't my own choosing,
But the Government, which said
That I must leave my family,
And sacred marriage bed.

The FBI was first to pry
Our soothing arms apart.
And, each time I returned to you
With ever swelling heart.

The Foreign Service, next, attempted
Separate our arms.
But I was not to be denied,
Returning to your charms.

I came back to you every time,
From places I can name:
Tegucigalpa, Honduras....
Pronounce it just the same.

Then 'international conferences'
Descended on our life.
The separations that resulted
Could have brought some strife.

The OAS had quite a meet,
In seventy and four:
The farthest from you I had been,
Yes, Quito, Ecuador.

And that same year Geneva had
Some orientation;
Then on to Spain to bring our daughter,
Karen, 'home in one.'

The 'Law of Sea' then intervened
In seventy and five.
Considering that travel,
How did our love stay alive?

Again it was Geneva with
One month between our touch;
But you have that memento in
A lovely pendant watch.

Ensuing year, the 'Law of Sea'
Did do us in again,

By interrupting annivers'ry
Five and ten and ten.

The time I spent in New York town,
One hundred fifty days,
Had left me spinning like a top,
And kept me in a daze.

In seventy and seven it was
'Law of Sea' once more;
But, just to help with my replacement:
Help him keep the score.

So, three short trips up to the 'Apple, '
Only ones I had.
In retrospect, then, I must say,
That year was not so bad.

And now the year is seven-eight;
Again, it's 'Law of Sea.'
Again, I'm in Geneva but
This time you come to me.
Before, I've always gone away,
And you, the one to bide.
This time you close the distance,
And, my feelings, I can't hide.

You've come a long way, Gerry, and
May our reunion be
The best that it has ever been:
This time you come to me.

(May 1978, Geneva, Switzerland)

Frank V. Gardner

Tom Showed What He Could Do

When, yesterday, Tom broke his wrist,
'Twas in a rugby game:
His first as one of the 'Fifteen'
To bear St. George's name.
He played the pillar in the scrum,
And threw the ball, as well.
The game was fairly new to him,
But who could really tell?

He hit the line, and held his own,
And forced opponents back.
He helped his team advance the ball:
The brunt of the attack.
Well, in the first half, things were fine:
St. George's went ahead;
But second half was different,
With another in his stead.

The half had barely started when
Tom had an accident.
An adversary broke his wrist,
And it was really bent.
So, Tommy had to leave the field,
His arm, now in a wrap.
And, with him gone, opposing players
Sought to close the gap.

The St. John's players and their fans
Could feel the tide would turn,
For 'number three' had left the game,
And they had points to earn.
While he was gone, St. John's pulled up
And made a forceful try.
With seconds left of playing time,
They kicked, and earned a tie.

And when we welcomed Tommy back,
A cast around his arm,
His disappointment couldn't really
Overcome his charm.

It's good that we had seen him play;
We really wanted to.
And he not only made the team,
He showed what he could do.

Frank V. Gardner

Two Dozen Roses

How many hours in a day?
They number twenty four.
How many hours can one give love?
Well, lovers don't keep score.

A clock that tells the time of day
Can't measure gifts of love,
Not those expected here on earth,
Nor sent us from above.

The clock ticks on incessantly
When lovers are apart;
And time drags on relentlessly
With every beat of heart.

Yet, hearts beat so expectantly
When lovers plan to meet;
While clocks and watches stand aside,
With time in full retreat.

Two dozen roses sent to you
Another gift in store,
When all these miles between us end,...
Those roses, twenty four.

I give you, darling, now, a gift,
With time and love to match,
So you may blend your heartbeat
With a lovely pendant watch.

How many years have you and I
Shared time, and love, and more?
And stuck it out through thick and thin? ...
They number twenty four.

Frank V. Gardner

Vienna Civic Pride

The Old Dominion's largest town,
 In Fairfax County lies:
One-half-hour's drive from Washington,
 Due west through open skies.
The 'Beltway' takes you close to it,
 And 'Sixty Six' does, too;
'One Twenty Three' is its 'main drag.'
 Yes, Maple Avenue.

The place is called Vienna,
 And they tell us it was named
To match Vienna, Austria,
 Whose beauty is so famed.
To check the beauty of our town,
 One looks around and sees
How homes, and lawns, and flowers blend
 With all our lovely trees.

Vienna really started growing
 Some twelve years ago;
And judging from the outcome,
 One could say it's not been slow.
The count is sixteen thousand now,
 With near twice that ahead;
But zoning's not for 'high rise, '
 It's 'low density' instead.

Yes, that's the pattern we have set
 For our community,
To give our citizens the setting
 For tranquillity.

This town began in eighteen ninety
 With four hundred souls;
So, let's commemorate one of
 Our more important goals..
Three quarters of a century,
 Incorporated now;
And in some special ways our town
 Has shown the others how.

Vienna Town is ours to have,
 To build, to shape.... and guide:
Such things which give us reason for
 Vienna civic pride.

(Written in Vienna, Virginia, to honor the Town's
75th Anniversary on June 2,1965)

Frank V. Gardner

Vow on Okinawa

One starry night on Okinawa,
Guns and men were still;
A young Marine was standing duty
On a lonely hill.

The battle ever carries on....
Two months it's been by now....
All dead exceeding ninety thousand;
And he wondered how....
How all the slaughter could continue
Under God's domain?
How long are minds of men expected
To endure the pain?

First Saipan.... Iwo Jima next,
He'd seen his buddies fall....
And, now again, on Okinawa....
No let up at all.
And was there any reason why
'Twas them instead of him?
Perhaps a reason, somewhat subtle....
More than just a whim.

On that occasion, then, he wondered
Why he felt so odd....
He had a realization....
As he felt the hand of God.

A vow was made that night in June
Of nineteen forty five:
A vow to God by that Marine....
If he got home alive:
He'd make a contribution felt
Among his fellow man.
He'd work to serve his country well,
According to God's plan.

It's forty years, now since the vow
Was made that night in June....
From his career in Government
He'll be retiring soon.

As people come to know him,
They may speculate on how....
He made a contribution.... and....
If he has kept his vow.

(June 1985, Falls Church, Virginia)

Frank V. Gardner

We Need a Bridge at Echols Street

(Tune: 'I've Been Working on the Railroad')

We were walking on the causeway;
Got pushed into the creek.
That is why we're using Maple;
It happened just last week.

What we need is something safer
For walker, bike, or car.
Echols Street needs a real bridge
So we don't walk so far.

(When my daughter was pushed off the causeway into the creek in May 1963, I wrote this marching song. Meanwhile I organized some 50 neighborhood children for a peaceful demonstration at Vienna Town Hall later the same month.)

Frank V. Gardner

We Want a Bridge at Echols Street

(Tune: 'Hi Lee, Hi Lo, Hi Lup up up')

We want a bridge at Echols Street!
We need it right away!
We're showing all the townspeople
By marching here today.

Hi lee, hi lo, hi lup up up;
Hi lee, hi lo, hi lup.
Hi lee, hi lo, hi lup up up;
Hi lee, hi lo, hi lup.

It's something we've been waiting for
Throughout so many years;
And in the process we have shed
A lot of sweat and tears.

Hi lee, hi lo, hi lup up up;
Hi lee, hi lo, hi lup.
Hi lee, hi lo, hi lup up up;
Hi lee, hi lo, hi lup.

That Maple Avenue is such
A long way all around.
A bridge at Echols Street that's safe
Is needed by our town.

Hi lee, hi lo, hi lup up up;
Hi lee, hi lo, hi lup.
Hi lee, hi lo, hi lup up up;
Hi lee, hi lo, hi lup.

(Children's march to Town Hall, Vienna, Virginia, May 25, 1963) .

Frank V. Gardner

We've Got a Bridge at Echols Street

(Tune: 'Hi Lee, Hi Lo, Hi Lup up up')

We've got a bridge at Echols Street
And it is built to stay.
We're thanking all the townspeople
By marching here today.

Hi lee, hi lo, hi lup up up;
Hi lee, hi lo, hi lup.
Hi lee, hi lo, hi lup up up;
Hi lee, hi lo, hi lup.

A bridge is what we've waited for
For oh so many years.
And now our eyes are smiling
Instead of crying tears.

Hi lee, hi lo, hi lup up up;
Hi lee, hi lo, hi lup.
Hi lee, hi lo, hi lup up up;
Hi lee, hi lo, hi lup.

For shopping and the library
We now don't go around
Because the bridge at Echols Street
Has let us join the town.

Hi lee, hi lo, hi lup up up;
Hi lee, hi lo, hi lup.
Hi lee, hi lo, hi lup up up;
Hi lee, hi lo, hi lup.

Children's march to Echols Street Bridge,
Vienna, Virginia, May 30, 1964

Frank V. Gardner

Widow and Very Special Mother

In nineteen hundred twenty four,
Because our father died,
Our mother had to go to work,
And swallow family pride.
She had three youngsters then to raise;
It was no easy task;
For handout or for charity,
She wouldn't ever ask.

She paid her way, and theirs, as well,
An everlasting grind:
Example of the highest type
That one could ever find.
From typist to important jobs,
Advancing all the way;
Was dedicated to her work,
And she was there to stay.

She put herself through high school
By attending class at night.
Then evening college studies
Would provide a future, bright.
She taught us things like faith and hope,
And, also, charity.
And, in addition, we were shown,
What's called: frugality.

But, halfway through her college quest
A major war was on.
So, Navy was the uniform
That she would neatly don.
The years she worked in Government
Would total forty two.
And, after that, she settled back,
With other things to do.

She's owned her home for forty years,
And now we help her stay there.
We often go to visit her,
And, now and then, we pray there.
She helps her children even now;
She's not like any other:
One of a kind, perfectionist;
A very special mother.

Frank V. Gardner