

Poetry Series

John Anderson
- poems -

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John Anderson()

A Purpose and a Place

How did I come to be a poet? How did I come to find the very light which shines in my soul, and teach it to speak? All people, we first need to understand, have poetry. Whether it shows in a political sermon to friends, negotiating with your woman, or helping an elderly neighbor with his groceries, those tiny lights find their way out one way or another, and I started writing them down.

I'm the middle child in a close-knit family of nine. We were raised in Detroit, in a loving, Catholic, Mom and Dad household that wasn't all that long ago in years, but many times seems like a different century. We were so close in age that when my oldest sister was in the first grade she had five younger brothers and sisters. It was a different era; a distant past in family upbringing becoming all too rare nowadays; for we not only lived together, but even ate dinner together also.

Many of my siblings stood out academically and athletically in both grade and high school and I, not quite ready to get on the treadmill called life, became good at another skill; just getting by.

I've always been artistic; always a kid with empty cardboard boxes, scotch tape and string, putting together one contraption or another. As a young boy and fledgling writer, I was editor of the family newspaper. The price of doing business, however, was great, as anyone old enough to have a nickel was also old enough to be an employee. In fact, the only paying customers were my parents. But a true artist isn't motivated by money as much as by interpreting and fulfilling that tiny light within, and seeing where it leads them. And my road to interpreting that light happened when it was shining the brightest.

That little light within us, that tiny whisper of emotion, contradiction, and inspiration was always in there, but the patience and ability to find it was not. I was busy doing the things that a lot of adults, especially ones who don't know what they want to be when they grow up, do. Among them was a sales career. I wasn't a passionate believer in any of the products I peddled, but I was a passionate believer in eating daily and paying the rent, which helped me find success at what I did. A career fulfillment which was difficult to see the light through, because its only reward was based on dollar signs.

This all changed one clear spring day as I totaled my car, job, my legal ability to

drive, and the attached self-esteem that a life, even if you haven't chosen it, brings. A car accident caused by my juvenile diabetes that was a wake-up call, and an accident that ended my life as I knew it, but opened up a new one that would give me the time to harness that light and find answers in it. Answers that I needed for survival.

It was an accident, in hindsight, that I thank the Lord for, as if I ran into the Holy Grail instead of a parked car. And while recovering, a second chance to work for the life I wanted, instead of the life I fell into. It was an opportunity to listen to that light.

I discovered a hope bred from hard work, solitude, and desperation. A different hope than the one I had only known before that was like the scratch off part of a lottery ticket.

It was a new fulfillment in life from working low paying jobs, even for an artist, within walking distance of my home. When your ability to pay for material things is poor, your ability to pay attention to the little things that fulfill you gets better. Survival inspires the light within to speak louder, and I wrote it down.

The poets who have inspired me most include Audin and Frost, and how they unfolded such complete thoughts to me as if their brain were in mine. I also attempt to capture mood in free verse.

I've written several books or near books, as most writers do, with several manuscripts with untold chapters waiting for a new angle, a different breath, a different lighthouse to follow. The accident that gave me the freedom to write inspired my second book; 'Tales of an unemployed, diabetic, single guy, ' as my accident was caused by low blood sugar. And that little light within that shined greatly during those days continued after that book, looking for a different target.

It's safe to say my third book, 'Precious Life, ' was from a different light than the one used by poetry, and although it came from the same inside, it may've been closer to the armpit area.

Perhaps I was too drained from writing my true-life story. Maybe I was just looking for something other than me to write about that was just as critical. The year was 2004, and it was hard to concentrate on anything but the Presidential elections, our country at war, and the double-talk, dirty tricks, and hatred our politicians espoused to each other during a time their citizens needed some sense of family, sincerity, and honesty. It made me realize that America, if they

actually allowed Congressmen to see the front lines of war, would be undefeatable. They are, ironically, brilliant destroyers. And their backhanded and deceitful ability to be destructive would keep casualties on our side at a minimum. What a shame they are such cowards! Not to mention that their tactics probably wouldn't be allowed by the UN (ha ha) .

Living through such hatred bureaucrats wish to infect their citizenry with made me want to immunize myself. It gave birth to my third book; 'Precious Life', a political satire about a Liberal movie star who becomes President, then quickly turns into a Republican while the now unemployed Republicans turn into Democrats. Writing it allowed me to live in a pseudo reality during the election. It allowed me to feel relief in how very much everyone is the same. I used these blow hards for both inspiration and characters.

Using them for this purpose allowed me to give thanks for the good, real people the world does have, and see how many people, once infected with power, lose that light within that directs them.

I truly felt like a millionaire.

A Compliment To A Soul's Fruition

The true value of a gift is measured by the giver's happiness
And the receiver's delight is in the endowment of the giver's time
For the substance of happiness and soul's fulfillment
is through the intimate knowledge of how and not through what you are thought
of
And the truest compliment to a soul's fruition is in those memories
For the essence of being remembered
is the loudness in which your silence speaks

John Anderson

Breath In My Night

The breath in my night has treasoned me today

The irony breaches my heart

So henceforth I know,
how daggers can carry as softly as clouds
and as sweetly as innocense

My day is voided out of the blue
and filled with missing and longing

For the breath in my night
Has left me to breath on my own

John Anderson

Christmas Eve

My knee-length coat hung heavily on me, like a shield for the battle ahead.
I clicked off the lights, grabbed a book, and opened my door to enter the
darkness.

Feet tragically pumping through virgin snow, which polka-dotted the evening sky
above.

Blood pressure sounding in my ears as I approached the bench where the bus
would stop.

And as I waited the wind whistled; forcing me from reading.

It finally came.

The rectangular metal tube glided across the velvet avenue, slowing to a stop
where I would board.

Frosted gray cars framed a path to the door.

The driver of the empty bus smiled into my eyes, and seemed perplexed why I
was there. Everyone needs someone, except him, he undoubtedly thought.

I sat down on a bench seat near the front. A rip dividing the couch in two
exposed the dirty yellow sponge inside.

Soon he pulled up to my stop, and with a professional smile firmly clanked open
the metal framed door for me to leave.

I plodded across the avenue and onto a sidewalk. Frozen cars, with sodden looks,
lined the streets. I walked the carved sidewalks passing living room windows
illuminating snow topped bushes.

Christmas lights outlining porches and piercing the dark air.

My mother's house was in sight.

As I entered the front door the heat coated me as a nephew jumped into my
arms.

Then it touched my soul.

I thought about my place, and purpose, and tucked my book away until another
time.

John Anderson

Find Hope

Do we put it in a smaller frame
As life carries on?
Or hide it in a closet
Like our old high school song?
Recall it through an illness
Where it translates into breath
I think it disappears
To some barren, dormant, nest

When we need it will it come
Like a bill collector calls?
Shouldn't we see it every evening?
The way God makes nights fall?

Does it knock on my door, or approach on the street?
Like a guest would visit a friend?
Or does it come like a nurse to her patients?
Whose rest she must upend

Will it come as a tap on my arm?
Or like the milkman comes to a farm?
If it doesn't write it on a sticky-note
How would I know it's around?

If it preaches in a mike like a priest
I hope I can stay awake
Does it finish like a TV sitcom?
Then try to sell me some cake?

Do I have to be in trouble?
It must know if I'm just kidding
And everyone to have it
must find where hope is living

John Anderson

Finding A Work Place

I climbed long escalators through the mall-like structure.
Through fast pacing people, tragically together, hectically alone.
Striding through a silent early morning.

I opened the glass doors and entered an outer office where I would wait. High-up rooftop views, sheltering us from the chaotic world below, provided a fitting view for what lie ahead.

A young secretary directed me from behind her desk to the place where I'd be waiting.

Sitting on oak furniture, under a high ceiling, in my best suit.
I took a cup of coffee from a white carafe and sat back down.
Empty Sweet-n-Lo packages in a neat holder.
Stoically observing the herd entering the office to begin their day,
while drinking from the Styrofoam cup.

My new manager sat in his glass office formulating his plans.
Excitedly looking like he had been there for awhile, yet he had just arrived.
And as he thought my day took structure.

He saw me sitting, and bounced out of his chair to meet me.
Papers folding on desk tops as he strode past, a sunbeam following him across the room.

Shaking my hand, he directed my shoulder to their meeting for the goals of the day.

Then seriously dictated them to earnest faces.

I could feel the purpose within.

I sat there, like a puzzle piece, watching their intentions to achieve.

Searching for the barren hole that I would fill.

Everyone has a place, and a purpose, I thought.

I refilled my cup, looking for mine.

John Anderson

Hiding

We give ourselves a place to hide
With simple words that do abide
Words we use to shut the door
To knowing us forever more

We paint the door a friendly coat
To mask the cracks that do denote
And hope our hinges won't betray
What we own in disarray.

As we stand behind this door
A tiny crack above the floor
It does allow a light seam in
But does little for the view within

We think the doorbell's ring is clear
But its true sound we do not hear
This door of platitudes do prevent
Letting all know the self-evident

John Anderson

I Dropped My Cell Phone Too Many Times

I dropped my cell phone too many times and it broke
Trying too many days to function on too little sleep
Shaking incessantly
Pulse racing
Its glow no longer bright
It wants to quit.

How do I tell anyone?

John Anderson

If

If I had it to do
all over again
To rebreath my life
and rework its end

If I knew then
what I know now
Would my life be different?
And if so; how?

Would I do my best
To stay away from the girls
Who can steal your heart
With a blush and a twirl?

Would I do my best
To study hard in school?
Wearing a diploma
hiding a fool

But the girl whose kiss
Is like a glass of wine
The one whose hug
Leaves you frozen in time

I'd never having
ever owned
the kaleidoscope of life
I've known

And knowing where
I'd never be
without ever having tasted
Life's majesty

John Anderson

Infinity To The Spirit Of Man

The evolving world looks at me every five or so years.
When something that is different has stopped being different.
And something that is the same is no longer there.
And the criticism cannot be it being different.

Because unless we accept the future, then it isn't the future.
And unless we learn from the past, then it isn't the past.

For time is a gift, and cannot be returned.
And its friendship gives infinity to the spirit of man,
And in his ability to learn.

John Anderson

Last Ride

I leave my city behind me
With a compass that leaks the view
Searching for salvation
A new life to come true

I slice a two-lane road
As it splits the landscape in two
I see the horizon meeting it
And think about missing you

On my right the parties we attended
Disguised as fields of wheat
On my left are rock-faced hedges
Like faces covering deceit

I thank the sun above me
For the bath in its bright eye
Another of God's masterpieces
Another reason to cry

The fields and hedges blur
The engine screams inside
It's looking for the place
Where heaven and earth collide

I don't use the rear view mirror
For it only holds despair
The fields and trees wave goodbye
...if only you were there

John Anderson

Love And Best Friends

In the islands of tables of a dark, crowded bar,
a girlfriend and I would meet.
After a while she sat down with some truth-
and left me alone to think.

There was no hope in her kindred heart,
of a future for us together.
Despite the island that we shared-
Our reality couldn't be forever.

I learned when love and best friends meet,
but their love has no future.
It could be because the island it's on-
is its only shining feature.

A perfect love that could be had,
as I sit here all alone.
Is like an innocent baby whose future rests-
on the promise that it's upon.

John Anderson

Maybe Life Is Humbug

I've heard that life is humbug
I've heard that it's a breeze
I've heard what makes the world go 'round
Is nothing to make you sneeze

And when I asked my neighbor friend
Grizzled, gray, and wise
A headache started forming
He began to rub his eyes

'Life can be long,
Life can be short
Life can be in-between, ' he said
'Full of joy or anger
An ogre furious and mean'

So then I thought how my life would unfold
Like I was watching it on a screen
It started many emotions
That made me want to scream

What do I do with my life?
To ensure a successful tomorrow
Should I run off to school with my books?
Or marry the preacher's daughter?

Should my job be nine-to-five?
With a receptionist pretty and bright?
Maybe I should marry her?
Or is that a passing flight?

Should I look for a gravedigger's shift?
Obscured from the pressures of day
I've always stayed up late
Although I've never worked that way

When I think of the people who've died
And also the people who've lived
Why couldn't they have written it down?

All that they wanted to give

Maybe life is humbug

It's certainly not a breeze

I need someone to talk to me

And tell me the answer please

John Anderson

My Purpose And Place I

I drove dark streets to get to my customer
Passing slouched buildings, crawling buses, and bedraggled men perched on
corners
I parked along the curb, eyed by two men sitting on newspaper boxes and
nursing drinks from paper bags.
Tragically reflecting no doubt on their lot, asking me for change.
The wind lifted and hurled newspapers and paper cups into closed metal gates of
the neighboring stores. The cinder-block store I was going to was open, but
needed paint and attention. Black bars affixed to its door.
A happy note sounded as I pushed to enter, contrasting the desolation within.
Advertisements for beer and wine stuck to the walls in uneven lots;
Attempting to hide cracked plaster.

The store had no windows, and the stagnant air covered all within.
Dented cans and dusty packages in straight rows lined the shelves, tiny statues
to make humility look at least orderly.
The abused owner marched toward me on the tracked vinyl floor.
Hair unkempt though where it belonged, a disarming smile curled his face and
contrasted the atmosphere that was his life.
He led me to the front of the store where we would do business.
Behind bulletproof glass he placed an order with me for delivery during his 16-
hour day.
He yelled, 'put it back! ' to a customer wandering the aisles, changing the
decrepit owner's expression.

I gave him his receipt, and thought to myself as I wandered out into the light.
Everyone has a purpose, and a place.
I gave the bums a dollar, and went to my next store.

John Anderson

People That I Know (Servicemen)

They humbly stand before us,
like people that I know.
But our glory is from the heart
of these people called to go.

Good towns and families raised them
until the nation called.
And traded all to fight for freedom,
to tear down bloody walls.

Those who stand before us,
most I've never met.
But I feel that I owe them,
from the freedom that they've sent.

The cost our freedom paid,
our friends of unknown names.
They fought for what they stand for,
when passion dignifies claim.

If I could list all those I owe,
a list that wouldn't stop.
These people that I'd like to know,
would be upon the top.

From all these people I'd like to know,
when I pray for our salvation,
please give to us the qualities they have,
that gave freedom to our nation.

John Anderson

Pinwheel Eyes

I look at life through pinwheel eyes
wondering which way to go.
Scared yet excited, happy and sad,
A pendulum trying to flow.

I want my soul to jump start my life
and lead me like the compass it is

To find that niche,
that utter fulfillment which,
keeps my soul alive.

John Anderson

Realization At A Bar

I parked my old car fittingly next to a dumpster.

The music was escaping into the sultry night air, drawing me to enter through a thick wooden door.

The loudness permeated my insides, reminding me I still had them.

It was as if the door had sealed a vault to another reality.

I walked proudly to the bar confident that I was noticed,
and sat on a bar stool that felt like a pedestal.

As if everyone saw me order a beer.

Successful, as I let my change sit on the counter.

I turned my attention to the dance floor.

Women and hapless men frolicking under the dim light's disguise.

As if they knew each other.

Feigning ecstasy, happiness.

I looked for a special woman.

Someone who held the key.

To make me feel smart and strong,
like the cash next to my drink.

And as I sat I watched.

People begging to be loved.

Bartering their lives to feel appreciated.

They were as bad as me.

I picked up my change and left.

Leaving the beer and bar stool, which were quickly removed and reoccupied.

In the contrast of the quiet lot, I felt contentment as I started my car and pulled away.

John Anderson

Something Spectacular

I climbed the narrow stairway to my room
Sat on my bed to read baseball cards
I could hear the sharp yells responding to each other, pitching at each other like
a pendulum
Dirty laundry frosted the room
The cat tiptoed to a safe place

And on the walls were pictures of sports heroes
Battling for a team; beating fear
Downstairs were my parents, Dad bowing his head at the realization that he
couldn't get through
Then hurling his fist into the wall
I sat there listening to doom breathing
The walls, room, the cat, parents

But amidst this pain was something spectacular
Siblings sitting on steps in the dark stairwell
Staring straight ahead
Talking softly with firm voices while perched on the tiny benches
My brother told old jokes
And my sisters didn't take sides
Parent's anger began falling on deafness
I thought to myself as I blankly gazed at my cards

About tomorrow

John Anderson

Song Of Hope

A lonesome seed lie cocooned in dirt;
dormant in moistened ground.
He lies and waits deep in a grave,
for the day he will be found.

He sings his song of hope within
of vibrant petals on an emerald stem.
He sings of niche and promises which,
give his life some meaning.

For what he longs he doesn't know,
but is sure that something is calling.
But its golden rays are only a dream,
while he sings his song of finding.

As cool rains fall on his grave of fear,
his kernel's walls begin to tear.
He sings his song as he reaches through;
as if it were a prayer.

Pushing dirt and wiggling forth;
a twisting, squirming, grope.
Inching up through fractions of ground;
and singing a song of hope.

At last, he's through to sun and air,
and cries in joy at his new found lair.
He sobs to a breeze in a pasture fair-
and he sings his song of hope.

John Anderson

The Cube Farm

I stopped not for gas, but a cup of coffee to go.

Coffee was my morning habit, though my stomach wouldn't have missed it this morning.

Soon I was parked on the charcoal lot between crisp orange lines, passing shiny cars as I walked toward the tall glass entryway.

Staring stone gargoyles flanking the doors aggravated my tension. Irritated more by the gleaming floor that clicked as I walked to the elevator.

The elevator was a prison cell escorting me to my floor.

Blank eyes above conservative suits and skirts marched in and out.

I watched the light above me move like a lit fuse.

A hushed bell rang, like it were signaling me for the next round, and I exited onto a carpeted gangplank that led to the waiting room of the office. I pushed the long handle of the frosted door and entered the cube farm. Eyes, twisting attached heads between the fabric walls, peeked at me as I marched.

The silence was deafening.

I would not be anonymous long.

He adjusted a button on his suit coat then shuffled papers above his desk. He placed them in a perfect pile in front of him.

We were two stumps, bookends to the papers, opposing each other.

The breath of his words wheezed out, like stoking a fire that was underneath me.

He told me they were letting me go, and his office felt even emptier, the pile more perfect.

I left him in mid-stoke, and walked the aisle to empty my cube, feeling concern from the anxious eyes of the Cube Farm.

I enjoyed my ride home.

John Anderson

The Hobo Was Offended

On a twisting road behind me
Full of stones and pits
I spot a lonesome hobo
Who looks pensive as he sits

He sits on a clean-shaved stump
And opens up his shoe
And empties it of dirt
While his toe is peeking through

I walk the path back toward him
Under a canopy of trees
That I've enjoyed so many days
When I didn't have miles to seize

His hands were folded in front
A dark wool cap pulled his head
It looked like he needed a bath
And to sleep in a real bed

I towered over this bum
Ready for his pleas
And felt a little like the Lord on High
With people on their knees

I nodded as he spoke
Still fastening on his shoe
I put my foot on a high, flat rock
As if his answers I already knew

'I could have had it made'
Like he was winding up the words
'If I hadn't taken a wrong turn'
And got what he deserved

'And there's my kid back home,
With only one road to their house'
I almost started to ask him
If he had actually had a spouse

I grabbed a leaf before me
As the fastened branch snapped back
I told him he could follow me
If it would help him get on track

Now he was standing up
The sun was hazing down
He stood before me in silhouette
And he seemed to share his frown

'I'm as smart as you, ' he said
Barely lifting his head
'If the road you took looked like mine,
you could be me instead'

By his tone he was offended
My eyes flipped open wide
For as he turned the shadow moved
And I was looking in my eyes

John Anderson

This Person We Knew

We gathered together; the oldest of friends
And told all we'd found and where we had been
We laughed and we smiled, it had been so long
Since we all were together in the place we belonged

We all were dressed in suit coats and skirts
And talked of our homes, jobs, and our work
We wondered how the years had come and had gone
Since seeing these people we had known for so long

And when we departed the proud funeral parlor
we got in our cars, our group a little smaller
Oh where do we go, and what do we do?
To replace what we had, this person we knew

The empty lot surrendered its last
Pulling out on the street, thinking of past
It led to two roads at the end of the bend
Roads we knew would eventually dead end

John Anderson

Those Who Aren't Indicted

Democrats whine as Republicans jeer;
those who aren't indicted
TV explores how nude it can go;
the First Amendment be righted
The nightly news doesn't verify its stories;
and its stories we cannot live without
Laws enforced on those that they choose;
everyone else wins out
Mom and Dad work their shifts;
while the babysitter's pizza is served
The TV drones its daily hum;
to settle the children's nerves

The world at war is costing too much;
with money not yet earned.
Keeping power from the hands
Of people who haven't learned

John Anderson

Which Way To Love?

As I wander through what ifs and thoughts unproductive,
I am lost.

Living in yesterday instead of tomorrow.
For giving up isn't moving forward,
or is it?

The route to go was always so sure,
but not yelling anymore.
And the open window's hard to find,
when the door shuts hard behind.

But it doesn't matter which road you take,
as long as you get there.
To see the sights as you breathe the air it brings.
My journey grew me up,
in a respect for the beauty of love.

John Anderson

You Were Saying Something In My Dreams

You were saying something in my dreams

I can't remember what it was-just how intent I was listening.

You were patient and nodding, soft eyes looking into mine, which I clearly remember.

I knew it was important. What subject was it? I don't know if I ever knew. I want to go back and get it but the blank cloak of my reality interferes.

You were saying something in my dreams.

Five more minutes is what I want, to go back into the fog and enjoy the beam of your face and mind. Your words not as important as your attention, absorbing your eyes and catching your nod.

Was it all the questions we are sharing and trying to solve? For having no answers I have so much to say.

Was it that my dreams are what I now look forward to? I wish my awake were my sleep and my sleep my awake.

John Anderson

Young Man's Death

A grey haired man in his 70s; hiding the spring in his step
A thriving man in his 20s; except he is dead

And as I sat in the crowded room
hunched shoulders; an air of doom
'It isn't fair, ' someone said
As if only a senior were ever that were dead

The spry codger felt guilty for being old
Like he'd stolen years, or cheated a toll
And no one asked did the kid smoke or drink?
'Cause he was far too young, was all we could think

But as I listened, looking like I was praying
I came to realize, none of us will be staying
He wasn't robbed, his years weren't guaranteed
At this point I realized a life has no deed

At the heart of recalling this person we've lost
Is not the way he approached the day's cost
Cause when we are young, assumptions are made
That we have till tomorrow, like a simple trade.

John Anderson