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Al Rocheleau

Photography by Gette and Evan Rocheleau

FloridaStatePoetsAssociation.org



Al in his music room



Left: Al and Gette, January 2021

Right: Pipefitter, Standard Oil of California, 1978

Al Rocheleau



~ Photo by Georgette Rocheleau

This issue features our past president, poet and teacher **Al Rocheleau**. More than eight months ago Al left Florida with his family for the state of Nevada, to reside in a beautiful new house overlooking Las Vegas. The home is situated at the edge of Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area, at 2800 feet on a ridge surrounded by mountains. It has been some time since Al formally left the presidency of FSPA, and while he continues to be an active member of our organization assisting when he can on a variety of projects and issues facing us, he has chosen this new life, locale, and set of responsibilities. Al is a caregiver for his mother-in-law when his wife Georgette, a longtime flight attendant for Southwest Airlines, traverses the country.

As the couple are able to share duties at home, Al works on a biographical novel involving the friendship of Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare, a book that includes a scripted collaboration of the two giants and their differing styles of dramatic blank verse, a long-term project of Al's that has already involved several years of research. The spacious house has also provided Al with an upstairs music room for his many instruments with which to play, compose, and record, and an adjacent office that not only supports his writing, but contains walls of music, more than 10,000 discs in all genres that Al has collected over decades. That said, the care-giving takes immediate precedence, and according to Al, will do so for the foreseeable future.

Al leaves many years of service to FSPA, including more than a dozen teaching engagements at our conventions, a major augmentation of our roster of chancellors, a speakers bureau, and direct access to his Twelve Chairs Advanced Poetry Course (180 hours) and the Short Course (12 hours). More than 40 of our members have already completed one or both of those courses. Many have also purchased Al's manual, *On Writing Poetry*, ranked in bookauthority.org's "Best Poetry Writing Books of All Time," and *Falling River: Collected Poems, 1976-2016*. In this issue, we include an interview with Al by Krishan Coupland, editor of *NEON Magazine* in the U.K.; a technical article, "A Portable Aesthetic: John Donne in the Twenty-First Century," originally intended for a refereed journal on poetics; and some of Al's poems.

Why Poetry: Al Rocheleau

30th August 2019

By Poetry in Public

As part of our Why Poetry series, we spoke to poet Al Rocheleau about the importance of poetry, how he got started writing, and what his influences are...

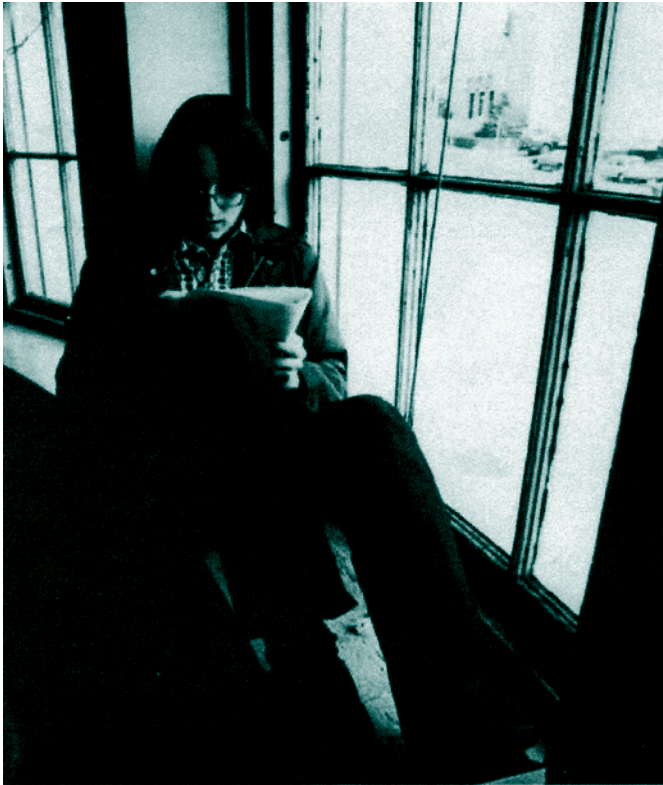
Why is poetry important?

Poetry breaks the chains of the routine, the curse of the automatic, of the unawareless-yet-still-living human being. On the great scale, it is the creative power that drives all art. That power is based on the existence of the aesthetic wave, the beauty and impact of what we perceive in the memorable and singular sunset, the surf, the baby's smile. A poetic wave is like that, but it's one that the artist creates. In literature, poetry finds its way not through the painter's paint and canvas, or the composer's notes and staff, but by the transmutation of agreed-upon symbols that spark instantaneous sound and image, restoring clear objects that when strung together, make larger objects. In other words, poetic construction restores immediately from its symbols specific physical items and their parts, or a panoramic field of them in which to feel deep emotion, and to think great thoughts.

You find this as the gold fabric of literary poetry, and it also winds as gold thread into songs, in important dialogue or monologue within plays, in speeches, and in fine descriptive passages of prose, the kind of prose you go back to and read again. Of these genres, written poetry, in waves lifting off the page or, as read, rising in the air, displays itself as the element that shows, leaving the telling, whether of instruction or story, to the explainers and tellers. For the poet, every word, every phrase and clause, plus the rhythm of spaces and sound-color, arrange as the mosaic of a greater aesthetic object. In the end, what poetry is, when well done, is something rare, powerful, and even life-changing – for minutes, or much longer. When you experience it, taking poetry read or heard into your own world and *re-creating* it your own way, through the prism of your own associations, memories, and imagination, it becomes a freeing thing. For that reason, whenever totalitarians raise their snaky heads, the poets are the first ones hunted down. As I said, poetry breaks all routine, large and small. As far as being something both important and different, I hope I've covered it.

How did you start writing poetry?

I was a prose writer from an early age; I wrote my first story, which I recall quite thrilled me at the time, when I was eight. I submitted my first story to a magazine when I was 14. But I suppose there was always something of the poet inside that writing. I had a healthy respect for the play of separate phrases and clauses, what they could do in making images, and the language itself was always music to me. In high school I was a ready absorber of English and American poetry of all eras (as well as, through nine years of French, the work of Rimbaud and others), but I remained a prose writer, a role my teachers thought would take me far. At the time I wrote poetry only as a lark, and yes, to "get girls".



Al writing in a notebook,
1973, Durfee High School,
Fall River, MA.

At some point, that changed. I found I had come to love poetry viscerally, philosophically, and at first I especially appreciated the work of singer-songwriters like Jim Morrison and Bob Dylan. Of course, I was inspired by just about everyone I read. It didn't hurt to have a great group of English teachers to support that education. Two years ago, I wrote to them all. Then I returned, from Florida to Massachusetts, and took them all to breakfast. They are now in their late seventies,

even eighties; I handed them each a copy of my *Collected Poems*, an 800-page, 40-year-inclusive doorstop of a book, then just released. The meeting, a beautiful time, was to say "Thank you." It was unforgettable.

What are your influences?

Looking back, in my senior year of high school it was TS Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" that so affected me it had me thinking that perhaps poetry would be the way to go. For me, then the future novelist, that was a *big* idea. Beyond the school's old anthology, I bought one of my own, *The Pocket Book of Modern Verse*. It was my companion, a small, thick paperback, and I still have it today. From it I gathered up a pantheon of great modern poets, ones of both tradition and experiment from the past century, and from there I seemed to keep going backward in time, buying new, slim collections, learning from earlier grandmasters. It seemed each had something special to share whether I was writing in free or fixed forms. From Marlowe and Shakespeare, it was that perfect expression of blank verse, from Donne, the extended metaphor, from Pope, a world within two lines, and from Keats, who put his pure heart into every piece he ever wrote over just five years, the idea of the poet's negation, to act as a neutral base for external sensation, something he called negative capability, and also, how to give life to objects.

My intent after high school was to attend Boston University. I had wanted to study with Anne Sexton, but she took her life that fall. I took off on the road instead, Jack Kerouac-style, landing in Berkeley, California. But I eventually returned home to Massachusetts, met a wonderful girl, and priorities changed again. Like all poets, our biography sometimes gets in our way, or maybe, it is necessary that it *becomes* a way we can travel, while picking

up our philosophic takes on life, and gathering the subject-vehicles to put them in. Accordingly, there were periods of time when I was raising a family that I couldn't write, but if I couldn't, I could read. Poets don't read enough, and it's the single biggest reason they don't progress with their own work. Also, giving back what you have learned from others or on your own is a great gift to yourself, and I've found that teaching what has worked for me over the years has been as rewarding as the writing.

We all have those moments when we wonder if all this work we do is worth it, knowing that poets don't get rich, that most of the time it is the poetry itself that is the wealth, the currency, the estate in the form of our completed poems, our publishing, perhaps the book on some shelf somewhere that will survive us, and then for someone else, can bring us back, and make those waves I mentioned wave again.

Finally, the poems that move me are those that make the mind move, or the emotions surge. You know you have read a fine poem when you find images darting around before your eyes, coming together like kaleidoscope patterns, when you feel a poem's overall form like sculpture, and when your response is quite physical – you exhale involuntarily, having taken in the string of clear objects and making them your own, and from that, your own *concepts*, not another's, concepts great or small, as you define for yourself the word "epiphany."



~ Al and Annette, photo by Georgette Rocheleau

Al Rocheleau. President, Florida State Poets Association (FSPA) 2018-2020; Founder and Director, Twelve Chairs Advanced Poetry Course, 180 Hours, accredited by FSPA; Lecturer, University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth; Emerson College; University of Florida-Oak Hammock Program; FSPA; and the Florida Writers Association; published over 200 poems and translations in more than 100 national and international publications; recipient, Thomas Burnett Swann Award; nominee, Forward Poetry Prize; Author, *On Writing Poetry* and *Falling River: Collected Poems, 1976-2016*.

A PORTABLE AESTHETIC: JOHN DONNE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

by Al Rocheleau



*John Donne
(1572-1631)
English Poet,
Oil on canvas,
after a minia-
ture, 1616,
by Isaac Oliver*

John Donne, founder of the Metaphysical School, is among the finest poets who have ever written in English. What is less known to readers (except scholars and divinity students), and yet much revered within his time, were Donne's sermons, an elevation of effective prose. Donne was not only a poet of brilliant insight and sensuality on the human level; he also became an Anglican priest and eventually, the dean of St. Paul's, England's national cathedral. In Donne's works, both secular and sacred, the artist's poetic sense, whether planned or instinctive, pervades the various forms of his literature, and erases the four centuries that might have divided the contemporary reader or listener from him. Therefore, Donne becomes, among others, an exemplar of his class, and of the power of poetic voice and device to transport deep emotion and intellect over barriers of time and form.

What is it that separates poetry and prose? The answer of *what*, or *how*, expands beyond writing. What, in fact, is the difference between being moved or excited by a gorgeous sunset or the feeling of cool grass beneath our feet, and being affected by a piece of music, a painting, a passage from a novel, or a poem? With natural things,

whether broad panoramas or individual objects, the response is *natural*. Nature appears to contain a latent and innate power to *affect*, and make *effective* aesthetic wavelengths available to all. With works of art, these aesthetic waves, whether as copies of *natural* objects, or as newly-minted (imagined) images, are communicated through the arrangement of musical notes, paint formations, or graphic symbols. As such, these “created” aesthetic waves of all kinds may be called, in any of their manifestations, *poetic waves*.

The effects are not wholly subjective. Physicist and mathematician George David Birkoff’s studies in the 1930s measured aesthetic properties in music, painting, and written poetry by examining the artist’s employment of replicable structures, forms, designs, patterns, and devices. The artist’s objective is of course to create a palpable effect upon the receiver. Birkoff held that the artist accomplishes this by the arrangement of naturally-affective proportions, ratios, and dualities: simplicity / complexity, similarity / difference, and clarity / ambiguity. The artist employs the media of sound, color, and symbol within various compartments, large and small. In so doing, he / she replicates the natural effects of aesthetics found in the environment, while also altering, amplifying, or carrying such aspects from one mode or form to another. Birkoff developed his theories via mathematical formulas in which he could reduce such effects to specific, replicable patterns and applied devices. Such devices can be seen to traverse literary forms and styles, and at their face, defy time periods. Used in concert, such arrangements and devices aimed at our auditory and visual perspectives, whether directly or symbolically, lift tangible poetic waves, and in so doing, create their physical and mental effects.

Focusing specifically on literature, what do the masters of these created waves have in common? Following Birkoff, it can be posited that strands of pure poetry weave themselves through all of our arts, and so may also color and make memorable our classic prose, from Swift to the Bröntes, to Hardy, Joyce, Fitzgerald, Wolfe, and Kerouac. An example:

*I cannot look down to this floor, but her features are shaped on the flags!
In every cloud, in every tree—filling the air at night, and caught by glimpses
in every object by day, I am surrounded with her image! The most ordinary
faces of men and women—my own features—mock me with a resemblance.
The entire world is a dreadful collection of memoranda that she did exist,
and that I have lost her!*

— Novelist and poet Emily Brönte, from *Wuthering Heights*

In classic novels and stories, sublime passages turn on their elevation of the language and a *vibrant* manner of expression (vibrant from the Latin *vibrare*: “to shake or move rapidly”—a decidedly physical, resonant mode of representation). It is for that use of language that we return to these books over and over, even as we already know well the characters and plot. The passages that most attract us are innervated by the kind of phrasing (by way of phonologic, metrical, syntactic, and semantic devices) that turns latent aesthetic potentials into active waves (yes, the same as those that thrill or move us as we spot distinctive objects, or witness scenes of surf or sunset).

As acts of personal creation, these raised aesthetic vibrations may be subtly reclassified as **poetic waves**, and they may exist in both poetry *and* prose.

Active phonological structures of various size and effect include assonance, consonance, rhyme, and the specific sonic or “musical” properties of individual vowels, consonants, and blends. Rhythm, whether visual (on the page) or auditory, would include meter or cadence in the form of syllabic counts, foot-units, accents, or line breaks and spaces. Syntactic structures engage the properties of order, emphasis, and balance found in rhetorical schemes. Semantic structures (of which Donne was among those most daring in use of image and logic) would include the family of metaphors and other rhetorical tropes that proceed from a poetic vision that seeks, often simultaneously, to raise, amplify, or condense thought and emotion. As Birkoff sought to quantify these properties mathematically, even while admitting he could only approximate poetic individuality and genius from one work to another, Donne, in his poetry and prose, and for that matter, Brönte and the others, realized the premise of these transfers.

Such poetic elevation, surpassing prose’s simpler objective to alert or inform, is found in literary poetry not as an occasional or segmented illustration as one may find it in prose, but rather as a wholly unrepressed, primary strategy. This is the plan of all poets of any ability, and it is fully achieved in the work of our grandmaster poets—even as these geniuses may *also* take to prose. In my classes, I have often brought out for students a particular piece by John Donne, written as the dean of St. Paul’s. It comes from a prose sermon in memory of Lady Danvers, prepared and recorded before July 1, 1627, the date the sermon was preached. I could have excised other segments of that speech (or taken from other sermons) for the objective I intended, but this excerpt certainly made its point, or several. In my experiments, I attempted to make clear that Donne raised tangible poetic waves as a constant, whether planned or as matter of course; his poems and prose are thus remarkably interchangeable in effect, regardless of the form.

I rearranged that prose segment via line breaks, transposing it **verbatim** into *free verse*, and called it “Confraternity of the Ghost of John Donne.” Reading it aloud, and allowing the class to follow off the pages I had prepared, every student thought the piece was a poem, was modern, and that, in fact, I had written it. The purpose of the exercise was two-fold; first, to underscore the brilliance of a poet whose utterance of language transcends form and genre, revealing the flexibility of attraction that pure poetic waves possess; and second, to show how form can be adapted to frame or to change, whether subtly or profoundly, the setting in which such waves attract and activate themselves in the mind of a reader. Further, the time period of the writing and the prevailing form was shown to become secondary to actual poetic content, a kind of manna that is inherent, and so is, as is all our great art, timeless.

(continued on the next page)

CONFRATERNITY OF THE GHOST OF JOHN DONNE

But as it is said
of old cosmographers, that when
they had said all that they knew of a country,
and yet much more was to be said,
they said
that the rest of those countries were possessed with giants,
or witches
or spirits or wild beasts, so that
they could pierce no farther
into that country, so when
we have traveled as far as we can, with safety,
that is, as far as ancient, or modern expositors lead us
in the discovery
of these new heavens, and new earth,
yet we must say at last,
that it is a country inhabited with angels,
or archangels,
with cherubim, and seraphim,
and that we can look no farther into it
with these eyes.

Where it is locally, we enquire not;
we rest in this
that it is the habitation
prepared by the blessed saints of God,
heavens,
where the moon is more glorious than our sun,
and the Sun as glorious
as He that made it;
for it is he himself, the son of God,
the sun of glory.
A new earth, where all
the waters are milk, and all
their milk, honey,
where all their grass is corn
and all their corn, manna;
where all their glebe,
all their clods of earth are gold, and all
their gold of innumerable carats;
where all their minutes are ages, and all their ages, eternity;
where every thing, is every minute
in the highest exaltation, as good as it can be
and yet super-exalted
and infinitely multiplied by every
minute's addition, every minute
infinitely better than ever it
was before.

Of these new heavens and this new earth
we must say at last, that we
can say nothing.

For the eye of man has not seen,
nor ear heard, nor heart conceived
the state of this place.

We limit and determine
our consideration with that horizon
with which the Holy Ghost has limited us,
that it is that new heavens
and new earth
wherein
dwells
righteousness.

In a later class, with the students already in the know regarding the source material, I again transposed the piece, this time leaving the propellant engine of line breaks for the discipline of iambic pentameter. (For metrical purposes this attempt, unlike the free verse, could not be done verbatim, but every effort was made to retain as much of Donne's writing as possible.) While this is the metrical form in which most of the students had read Donne's poems originally, they saw that it was also possible to take the grandmaster's prose and fashion it into the accentual-syllabic meter that dominated his age, and yet still exists in ours.

(Continued on the next page)

CONFRATERNITY OF THE GHOST OF JOHN DONNE

But as it is said of old cosmographers,
that when they'd said all that they knew
of a country (and yet much could be said),
they said the rest were possessed with giants,
or witches or spirits or wild beasts
so all would blink and dare a'pierce no farther
into that country; so when we've gone
as far as we are able, and with safety,
far as ancient, or our own expositors
can lead us to discovery of these
new heavens, and new earth, yet we
must say at last, that it is a country
inhabited with angels, or archangels,
of cherubim or seraphim, and that
we look not farther into with these eyes.
Where, we enquire not; we rest in this,
resolve it to the habitation made
by blessed saints of God, and heavens, where
the moon is more glorious than our sun,
and Sun, glorious as He that made it;
for it is he himself, the son of God,
the sun of glory.

A new earth, where all
waters are of milk, and all milk,
as honey, where their grass is corn
and all their corn, of Moses' manna come;
where all their glebe, and all their clods of earth
are gold, and all their gold of innumerable carats;
where all their minutes age eternal be;
where every several thing, is every minute
cast exalted high, to be as good
as it can be, and super-yet-exalted,
infinitely multiplied by every
minute's next addition, every minute
infinitely better than before.
Of these new heavens, this new earth,
we say at last, we can say nothing.
For eye of man has not seen, nor ear heard,
nor heart conceived the symbols of this place.
We founder to determine and consider
toward the Holy Ghost's horizon veiled,
and that it is entire of that new heav'n
and new earth wherein dwells righteousness.

The point is made that poets, especially great ones, carry poetic sensibility with them always, and that we as artists can work in and out of forms to find what for us will be the final “right” or “best” setting for a creative intent, as represented in the molding and firing of that ultimate aesthetic “object” that will be our poem. Using our knowledge of pattern and device to a greater or lesser extent, we fill in the variables of Birkoff's equation, taking the poet's aim to lift the latent aesthetic potentials of perception and imagination into palpable aesthetic / poetic waves, thus realizing the aim. Such an ability (employing the same device-components) is seen as transferable *between* forms, and has no time stamp. Only the quality of the *artist* and his / her intent, rather than any general form or period style, dictates the quantity and quality of poetic waves created. In the great poets and prose writers, these conditions affirm themselves. In the writings of Donne and other grandmasters of English poetry, the effects projected in this thesis, available to readers and listeners alike, cross forms and centuries, reaching their apotheosis.

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Selected Poems by Al Rocheleau

THE TWO SAD SISTERS

So two sad sisters up the cherry lane
sold many modest baskets of globes, garnet
in their season; the lithe limbs, the cherries,
splayed out surely toward their succulence
and not too dear, were excellent in pie.

The sisters had goats; a red-haired he-goat
whose mate had died, several comely daughters,
and one with child, the father's child, as such
are he-goats and such epithets are made,
but milk and cheese would tithe the sullen winter.

In bristling frost, the March of an expecting,
a beautiful young goat gave way to birth
but by a fate of turning, breeched in rib
the kid could only writhe; the while, women
hands up to their elbows deep, swore and swore.

Then standing overhead like gray angels
the two sisters let the daughter die;
having cut the broken child from itself
the two lay as life's wracked figurines
in a squandered manger, wiping eyes.

Backed within his stall, the he-goat brayed
as if it were, and was another day,
nothing to him, cast among the stubbled
orchards and the house, its door-crack dim
with sun of a delayed retribution.

Yet that and every summer, down the lane
on every several openings of wall
into a curtained window, pastries cooled
on ledges, some with edges dripping
onto muslins, folded bright with stain.

PASTORAL

So many times we've arrived here
shined round or beveled,
nimble found in the business of fingers,
holes in our teardrops,
blind girl under a tree
stringing beads.

We know the covet
of starlings, share their blackness,
pretend to ignore a seasoned hop,
the escape, silk flown to the bungalow
of their monogamy, crystals
among seeds.

We cannot be swallowed,
so we shine
in the dryness of reeds,
in hallowed crest of limbs,
shine for the blind girl,

shine for Thee.

AGAINST THE RUINS

The architecture of us never comes to catalogue
in shelves of British Library-decked decorum,
twelved into itineraries, walking tours of Kent,
but rather, they present as left-living small creations,
real smiles or their memory, estates of dolor's sense.

O! but in the minds of us, we stacked the pearly marble,
hoisted high and chiseled, emoried smooth in its perfecting,
arched the nave suspending Gothic predicates of graves,
stained the glass rococo in the light of our misgivings,
circumstance and argument, flailing at our dreams.

Such edifice of foam and reverie, you and me, assuming
we'd remain the virgin's ever-asset of assumption;
borne of monumental issues formed from here or there,
we were so sure we would, we could sustain the grand
of our designs, the periods and eras of our weigh—

but they go, don't they, disrepair themselves of wind
and sun, expanding ice and rain, surrender sin, and pain—
and all we realize, too late, the effort to enleaven
what's important to a permanence of state, restates
that life will always gainsay us, demolish us within.

Perhaps a little sign instead, that children play around
will mark us, or will poem in a volume in a drawer;
lie me, us, a promise everything that goes comes round,
as wrens alight upon some carved stones not teetered yet,
as whenever touch the mind of God, our buildings fall.

REACTION

The iron nail
placed in a jar of vinegar and pennies
bubbles as the sour sea
turns blue.

Across dull time
excited ions dance;
the nail specks with brown
and shine.

The still solution
once aquamarine, goes golden,
then like tea, finally
coffee, very black.
Smells like pennies, too.

Each day the nail coats, counts,
forces itself to accept conditions
to which it is not immune.

The boy and I record results;
we've come to understand the silent,
acid bath, what it can do.

We plate the hours copper

missing you.

A BIRTH SOMEWHERE, AFAR

*I know; your tea is steeped,
and ready now.*

The old have their separate wonder.
They own the codes, the secrets
leached into walled vaults in deep places,
gaining sights of young
and unshorn faces, as they pass
prayer beads and
sit, amid daily shows of predisposed laughter,
of bells ringing; they hear a seeped
and separate singing
of their song.

They repaint Seurats
with colors they've retained,
dulled by dust but innervated
with moments of lucid self,
and though they've forgot the coming,
and the pain,
they remember shoots of rain that slapped
the pier, and running
to the arms of one
who left them, but
who left them sane.

So don't pity, or profit from,
or profane them. They
are turning into angels—
learning the lyre and orange
guitar of the cherubim who
sit by the chair of God, or who return
with that music, sared and dotted
mid the drum and sarod
of Delhi's sunrise or yet, suburban
child, in a house with suburban
garage, not quite reincarnate,
but not quite mirage.

And at that,
I prepare my long goodbye, mother,
I prepare it now, and revel in
this passing of your passage
in every hour, losing to me your offerings
and your alphabet,

but gaining for me, soon enough,
your stars.

AT A CAFÉ, LONGING

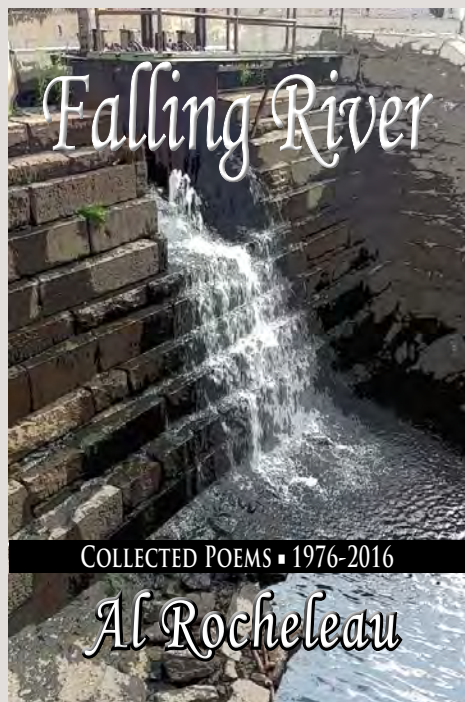
What if the devil gave up.
Arranged to meet Jesus
at a sidewalk table and they jotted feverishly
on yellow pads, comparing notations
between sips of absinthe.

What if that is them, there
as we sit amid the honks of motorcars
our scones just arrived,
our tea steaming.
They get up; it is after a long while
and they embrace.
The world suddenly
seems to have more color—
green becomes kelly, simple red, crimson
and magenta, and brown
the autumn of your eyes.

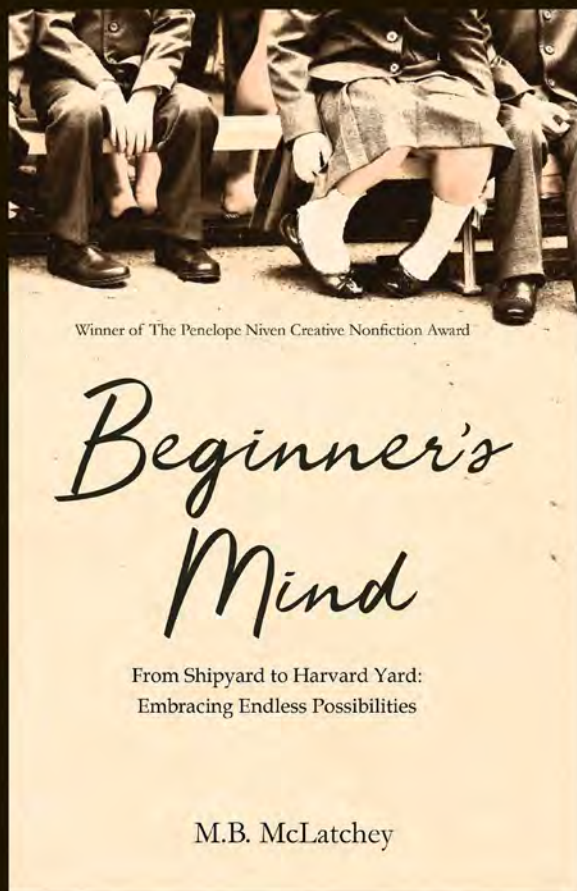
Even if I am wrong— about it, them,
the man and the man,
there is still the day
and there are still, your eyes.

Falling River—Forty Years of Collected Poems by Al Rocheleau

In *Falling River*, FSPA's past president, poet Al Rocheleau, offers a comprehensive collection of his work, spanning five decades beginning in 1976. Al's verse has appeared in more than eighty magazines in six countries. It can be found at websites as diverse as the Surratt House Museum in Washington, DC and the Saint Bernadette Institute of Sacred Art in New Mexico, and earned honors such as the Thomas Burnett Swann Award from the Gwendolyn Brooks Writers Association, and a nomination for the Forward Poetry Prize in the U.K. *Falling River* offers all kinds of poems of various forms, intents, and levels of ambition, poems heavy and light, sacred and profane. Renowned poet Lola Haskins says of Al's poetry, "These poems, so full of love and seriousness, have a good chance of lasting."



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Beginner's Mind


From Shipyard to Harvard Yard:
Embracing Endless Possibilities

by M.B. McLatchey

In a time when our schools are shackled by institutionalized goals, *Beginner's Mind* examines the question, "How do we want teachers to educate our children?" The answer is given to us through the eyes of a poet in a series of classroom memories that put on display the endless possibilities for children when a teacher's love is combined with their beginner's mind.

"Word for word, sentence by sentence, I am enthralled. Thank God for Miss D, and for being reminded that at least one or two of my own teachers were, if not her equals, close sisters. While the writer appears like a new comet on my horizon, I am wild to know what this writer will do next. Meanwhile, she will be 'graded,' though A+ hardly describes my admiration."

-- Emily Herring Wilson
Judge, Penelope Niven Creative Nonfiction Award

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