



Poet's Corner

Pat Daly

From a personal point of view, one of the few saving graces associated with this year's miserable summer was the re-emergence of Veronica Trayers as a contributor of material to Poet's Corner. Some years ago her work adorned the feature but suddenly, for whatever reason, the distinctive poetic voice fell silent. Now, it is speaking for us once more, as lyrically as ever; and we are really pleased.

There is much to admire about Veronica's Looking Forward - the use of language and device, the general tenor. While it is a poem that invites analysis and interpretation, even a casual reading will prove rewarding.

Looking Forward

by Veronica Trayers

We are here, and now one, and all
 The past a tome of history, a story,
 A book of people and forgotten glory;
 Indelible stories we cannot recall
 Or half-remembered thoughts that fall
 Like grounded flights of fancy.
 The past swathed in the veil of today
 Stretches a hand to break our fall.

Now we step carefully on quicksand
 With footprints made so gently.
 We have travelled through forest and desert land
 To reach this oasis gratefully.



Aspects of life and living that are quirky and/or topical are grist to Finglas-based John O'Hehir's poetry mill. Regular readers of the Journal will recall his spirited rant about the activities and attitudes of clamping squads which was published here some time ago. John's most recent work offers quite a contrast. His word-picture of the veteran sergeant, grown old and dusty in his bailiwick, is quite memorable. Then, when the topical note arrives, it does so with a flourish.

Changing Times

by John O'Hehir

The sergeant barely raised his head,
He had seen it all before
As 20 new red-raw recruits
Squeezed through his store room door.
Dust had settled on his greatcoats
And a little on himself,
Like the tarnished copper on tunics
Lying dormant on the shelf.

His measuring tape in hand,
Some chalk behind his ear,
He gauged the man in front of him
Without malice, ill-will, fear.
He could measure you by eye,
Your body and your worth,
As he rubbed his aching leg
Where the piece of shrapnel hurt.

'Thirty two around the waist
With an 18 inch neck:
A 42 inch chest
And a 30 inside leg.'
So he went about his work,
Both accurate and neat
And soon 19 recruits
Were all clad and complete.

'Number 20, step forward please;
He could not pronounce the name:
But no matter where they came from
He knew people were the same.
'Try these boots on your feet,
What is your size of hat?'
But the guard made no reply,
The questioning fell flat.

Then from his trouser pocket
The recruit produced a note:
The sergeant grabbed his glasses
Then softly swore an oath.
His head began to spin,
There was weakness in his knees
As he read the requisition -
'One Garda turban please.'

*Changing
Times*

Archives of Christmas Past

by Kelley P Keery

Excitement awakens me, winter's in the air:
Snow is on the rooftop, has Santa been there?
I sit up in my bunk bed, push the covers aside,
Grip the edge and flip over without breaking stride.
Footed jammies ease the landing as they have for so long;
Mom insists I use the ladder, she'll never know I've done wrong.
Shake, shake of my sister, resting in the lower bed;
Can't imagine why she'd pull the covers over her head.

'Have you forgotten the day, the things we must do
In order that our Christmas wishes may come through?'
Hygiene is first, brushed teeth and combed hair:
Faster in the bathroom and soon we'll be there.
Beds must be made with the utmost care;
If Dad cannot bounce the quarter - beware.
Three kids in a row; knock, knock on the door;
Their presence confirmed by that silly whistling snore.

My clarinet, her trumpet, his trombone made three:
Mom and Dad serenaded with a hurried melody.
The jitters grow stronger as we wait while they rise;
Three kids all aglow with magic in our eyes.
Finally they emerge, each year it is the same:
Mom and Dad lead the way in our family Christmas game.
Down the hall, round the corner, to the top of the stair:
'You kids sit and wait, we'll see if Santa's been there.'

They study the room, it shimmers and shines,
Then soon they confirm that Santa's made it on time.
This year it's my turn to brave the steps, first of three,
Guided by the light of the silver Christmas tree.
Lights all aglow: red, green, yellow, blue:
For years this tree had made my Christmas dreams ring true.
Brother, sister to follow, family now fills the space,
Piles of presents galore, each child their own place.

'Wow, look at this! Can't believe he came through!'
'Got what I asked for! How about you?'
'The sled of my dreams, Flexible Flyer, sits still;
Soon to make me king of the snow-covered hill.'
Suddenly I stop, I stand still and stare:
My one-wheeled wonder, balanced by the rocking chair!
This cycle would set me apart from the others,
Santa must have had a long talk with my mother.

As our spirits grow calm, Mom calls us to the table,
For a breakfast smorgasbord we are ready and able.
Polaroid snapshots hold memories crisp and clear:
I've never grown tired of these rituals each year.

With the months marching relentlessly onward towards year's end, there was a distinct possibility that we would not be in a position to include a Christmas poem in this year's December issue of the Journal. However, with beautiful timing the ever-helpful Jack Keery obliged in the grand manner, providing one that serves our purpose admirably. It is the work of one of his daughters. Naturally, it has a flavour of Uncle Sam's fair land, but the sentiments are universal.

