

Prologue to Poems with a Message

These thirteen poems have a message that reminds us to be alert, to respect our environment, and to cultivate critical thinking and a questioning nature. These goals my wife taught to her remedial language arts students at Kelly Junior High and were goals we shared in our private and professional lives before and after we were married. Since she died in 2004, I have tried to stay aware of their enduring values and use them in my daily activities.

Background: This poem was composed to introduce a TV program on Public Access Channel 14 in Norwich, Connecticut. I have produced the program continually since its start in 2006, The format included guest from the local community and discussions on topics that questioned our leadership and values on issues local, national, and global.

A Questioning Nature

by Ernie Cohen Jan. 2006

Doubt stars are burning,
Doubt the sun is turning,
Doubt truth never lies,
But, doubt not thine own eyes,

Shakespeare wrote the following four lines I used as a model.

Doubt thou stars are fire,
Doubt that the sun doth move,
Doubt truth to be a liar,
But, never doubt I love,

A Saucy Molecule

By Ernie Cohen, Nov. 2008

Hello, I'm a CO₂ molecule, born hot out of the tail pipe of a Chevy pickup.
My father was an excited oxygen atom and my mother, a high octane mama.
I have six brothers born together in the number four cylinder.
My mama lost our seventh due to incomplete combustion.

You can't see me, cause I'm only six angstrom long.
I'll stick around for a while, as long as a green leaf
doesn't change me into a sugar baby.
Later, I'll take off for higher places, and join my extended family
in the troposphere.

We got an important job up there. We prevent you guys
from freezing up.
Consider us to be your cozy, wooly blankets, transparent insulators,
Letting sunlight pass, but stopping some of your heat from leaving.
But, there's a hitch in what we do. When there are too many of us,
We hold back more heat than you need.

So far we been doing O'K; but lately it's getting a little crowded up there.
You guy have been burning coal and oil like there's no tomorrows.
Your icecaps are melting, sea water temperature are rising,
and all your seasons are getting warmer.

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A Saucy Molecule Continued

It's not our fault if those four bad boys down there,
Hurricanes, droughts, forest fires, and tornadoes are acting up.
Look, it's up to you to control our population, if you want cool cities.
We only got two arms, and there already bending from the heat.

Tell your leaders it's time to start leading.
I better sign off now and go back to work.
There's several heat quanta heading my way.
Oh, those guys are hot!

Anyone know where I can get a pair of asbestos
mittens?

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Benedict

by Ernie Cohen June 2013

A single flaw can sink a ship,
An open weld, a missing rivet.
Or bring down a mighty warier,
That great and noble Achilles,
Son of a Goddess who held his heel
 above the immortalizing waters.
That mortal spot she held, a Trojan arrow found.

So it would be with Arnold, that brave and fearless lad,
Who at fourteen fought the French and Indians
 far from his Norwich home.
Later, with the Green Mountain boys
 he fought the British to free our country
For three years he led armies of farmers,
Beating the British regulars at Lake Champlain and Saratoga.

He became Washington's trusted comrade.
But, an ungrateful congress promoted younger men,
And neglected his valor and service,
Envy, fed by a socially ambitious wife, boiled inside him,

He sold Washington's trust for 6,000 pounds
And led the British against his native country.

His end came later; alone and in debt.
Traitor or hero, you make the call;
His judgment was flawed; his bravery was not.

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Do Five Things

By Ernie Cohen October 2006

This poem is dedicated to Rita, my deceased wife

Sometimes it seems we're overwhelmed,
By matters both big and small.
And our hearts skip a beat as we think to retreat,
From the magnitude of it all.

That's when she would say,
"Narrow your gaze and focus your sight,
Just do five things, and you'll be alright.
And when they're done, why do five more,
And pretty soon you'll be done with that chore."

It's really a matter of breaking it down.
Each note of a song makes it own sound.
God bless you my love, wherever you are,
I'll take five steps while I shoot for a star.

And until we're joined in nature's long rest,
I'll remember your words and just do my best.

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Prologue: to “Genie” written after the disastrous oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010

Genie, by Ernie Cohen © June, 2010.

I am the oil genie that sleeps beneath the ocean’s floor.
I have been asleep for millions of years, Do not disturb me.

Isn’t it enough that you rob my brothers and sisters that sleep
beneath the grassy plains and frozen tundra?

That you burned them in your furnaces, separated their parts
in your refineries, and cracked their spines to make your
gasoline and jet fuels.

But they fought back , though they are not the warier that I am.
They polluted your air, spilled into your rivers, and killed
your fish.

They reached toward the heavens and blanked your sky,
Causing your earth to warm, your glaziers to melt,
And your rivers to overflow their banks.

And now you come after me.

With your floating islands, your long teeth,
And your pipes to drain my blood.

But I will teach you a lesson you won’t soon forget.

I will wash over your shorelines and stain your beaches.

I will destroy your fisheries, oyster beds, and shorebirds.

And I will reach in to your boardrooms and humble your
CEO's and your President.
I will reign my terror for ninety days and ninety nights.
For I am the oil genie that sleeps beneath the ocean's floor;
Do not disturb me!

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Gondwana

by Reba Estra April 1963

You unite Gondwanaland,
No need to check with me.
Here on the beach I shall stand,
For whatever time there be.

Any which way your continents went,
Won't matter to me at all.
However the times and tides are bent,
I'll wait for that certain call.

His voice will unmake geology's time,
And put all back in place.
And I'll breath again, I'll live, I'll shine,
when I can see his face.

Inspirations

By Ernie Cohen April 2011

A thought can suddenly appear,
Like sunrise above the eastern hills.
If not grasped and held,
It fades like the sun at eventide.

Those thoughts that come with day's first light
Can be held if we write them down.
So place a pad nearby your bed,
Or write them on your bedroom mirror.

A friend who hears and shares your thoughts,
One, on whom you often rely.
That friend one day may die.

So consider your friends,
They're not just for you.
They need a friend too.

And a love that's not heard,
Is often not felt.
So cherish the love, the friend, the thought,
Grasp them, touch them, and respond.

January Temperatures

By Enie Cohen © Jan.09

If I was only a spiritual man and global warming a spiritual crusade,
Then as temperatures around me dropped into minus numbers,
I would say, "Lord, you are sorely testing me."

You want to know if I can keep the faith
when all around me is ice and snow.

"Lord, my belief in global warming is not based on faith,"

For I am also an enlightened man,

An inheritor of the knowledge gained by generations of pragmatist, from
Benjamin Franklin to Albert Einstein.

And while the temperature on my porch dipped to minus six degrees,
And ice crystals covered my kitchen windows,
I checked weather maps across the northern hemisphere
from Anchorage, Alaska to Moscow, Russia, to Geneva,
Switzerland.

Their low temperatures read: twenty six, twenty one, and twenty eight, an
average of thirty one degrees higher than mine.

So my love for science remains strong, dear Lord.

Yet still I pray that my brothers and sisters,

Who are not heeding the signs and dangers of climate change will
join those working to reduce the numbers of deaths and
destruction.

NICE NICE

By Ernie Cohen © April 2007

Remedial teaching is boring some say,
Like counting pennies at end of the day.
I'm a teacher with a story to tell,
About a boy who wasn't doing so well.

Sometimes a light illuminates a rock.
It happened to me and came as a shock.
"Nice, nice", he said as he walked past my desk,
Where earlier I had set some rocks to rest.

"What?" I asked as he went toward the door.
"I didn't hear what you said before."
"That's nice gneiss," as he pointed to one,
"I was just having a little fun."

"How did you know that stone was gneiss?"
"Oh, I read a book that described it twice."
"Please, read it for me so I can see."

He read that page and others as well
without a pause and not a word fell.
"Why in my class?" I wanted to know.
"I can read, but my writings won't go."

"I'll help you", I said to that young boy,
And to myself, "Teaching can be a joy."

Our Changing Universe

By Reba Estra March 1963

Edited by Ernie Cohen August 2013

Luminous crystal shells,
 fill our nightly skies,
While our furious sun,
 a slave to the earth,
Follows its daily path,
 in Ptolemy's friendly universe.

Stars, far fled to points
 forever fixed in emptiness,
While our swift fleeting earth
 continues its eternal race,
In Kepler's stranger universe.

Earth, a mote in immensity;
Yet reaching out with finite reach
 the infinite to embrace,
 in Newton's alien Universe.

Pecans and The Gray Squirrel

by Ernie Cohen March 10, 2013

Philip, the gray squirrel, who regularly eats bird food
was at it again this morning.
Only this time he was in for a surprise,
Pecans directly from South Carolina.

At first he refused to taste one. pecans are southern nuts,
But Philip, is a northern squirrel.
When he returned after a short break,
He began investigating the pecans.

“What's this? No shells!” said Philip.
But, his curiosity led him to taste one,
And before you could say, “Gray squirrels like nuts.”
The rest were gone.

Now, Philip talks with a southern drawl.
“You all, come see me, real soon;
And have some pecans when you're here.
They're mighty good, and good for you.”

The Changing Forest

by Ernie Cohen Jan.2013

The forest is different today.
It wasn't the sudden dropping of leaves,
That caused the change.

The leaves fell two months ago,
Spreading over the ground like a thick blanket,
And turning everything brown.

Then, last week a white sheet of fresh snow fell,
hospitalizing the forest floor,
Making everywhere appear the same.

But, today it has changed again.
A gentle rain falling last night cut
random patterns in the white snow.

How nice it is to see randomness,
Where once only solid browns,
Or pure whites prevailed.

And unlike the stolid forest,
Nature's changing patterns affects our minds,
Lighting up and brightening spirits partially frozen
in our daily routine.

Who

By Ernie Cohen © July '09

Prologue: In biblical times God caused the great flood that destroyed all life except what was on Noah's Ark. After the rains stopped God promised Noah He would not do that again. Today, after centuries of living on earth the danger of rising seawater and disastrous floods again threaten life.

Who stopped the rains,
And lowered the waters,
And set the ark on dry land?
Who promised Noah, “never again?”

Who heats the land,
And increases the winds,
That feed the fires,
That destroy the trees?

Who melts the icebergs,
And shrinks the glaciers,
That raises the waters,
And floods the land?

Who makes the choices now?

Prologue to Poems about Love and Caring

As was mentioned in the introduction, my wife's poems conspicuously omitted romantic themes and during her classes at Connecticut College bordered on somber. Later, during the years of our marriage her mood changed and was very loving as indicated in her poem "Chocolates". I have no doubts that we were faithful to each other and very much in love.

After her death I often felt the need for female companionship. Partly, I believe because of my nature and partly from my insights for their wisdom that grew out of my marriage to Rita. I hope my poems written after Rita died convey these feelings.

A February Morning

By Ernie Cohen Feb. 2013

A faint snow fell on the forest last night,
Coating the naked branches
with a thin layer of crystalline flakes,
Where early morning sunbeams now shimmer and dance.

I wish she were here to see it;
She noticed nature's wonders.
Her keen, bright eyes,
focusing and storing it away.

I have her picture on my table.
Her smile and her sparkling eyes,
Another of nature's wonders,
Rivals to the dancing sunbeams,

They bring back memories of walks in the woods,
tenting across from the Continental Divide,
and camping above the Bay of Fundy,
where the first sunbeams reach the U.S. shores.

She is still here in my memories,
In my poems, and in my stories.
There she will remain,
A comfort and guide to my final journeys.

A Valentine to Rita

By Ernie Cohen Feb. ~ 1986

With this heart I send my rhyme,
A poor, dumb poet one word at a time.

A white crow flew across the sky,
Together, we saw it, you and I.

Like when we met by chance one night,
A look, a dance, what made it right?

If life's a hand we're dealt to hold,
Let's live each day as we grow old.

Chocolate

By Reba Estra Feb. 1998

Fats and calories add to our decay,
But chocolate splendor is part of this Day.

So let's remember the pleasure of love
by tasting the completely forbidden.

And share in the caring, now hidden;
Not gone, it's there along with Spring.

It waits to regrow, and together,
As tenders, we can make it so.

I Had a Hat, I Had a Love

By Ernie Cohen Feb. 2010

To my lovely Sophie, Valentine Day, 2010

I had a hat that came and went.
I found it in a parking lot,
One cold and snowy day.

Stitched with threads of many colors,
Purples, blues, and yellows,
Along with my black jacket they made a pair.

But now it's gone, it disappeared.,
It could be lying on a road,
Or in a wash I'll do someday.

Like a love that has gone away
Taking with it its sparkling eyes.
By death, or war, or pride,

I'll not be sad. I'll keep the faith,
That love returns someday.,
For nature often finds a way.

I still have hopes and do believe,
That when I least suspect it,
Both, will be there at the end of a day.

SOPHIE

by Ernie Cohen Jan. 30,2012

I would had to have written a sonnet,
If her name had been Janette
But, thankfully her name is Sophie,
So here is my poetry.

It wasn't on the Isle of Capri,
Where I met my cute Sophie.
Thank God it was only three blocks away,
Since lately my gait has begun to sway.

I've climb those hills quite happily,
To the house of my cute Sophie.
There, we sip morning coffees,
And read our favorite stories.

It's not as daunting as Capri
Or a swim in the Aegean Sea.
But it's a habit I can do,
And seems to be working for me.

Summer Nights

By Ernie Cohen April, 2007

There is a place deep in my heart,
That brings back the day we had to part.

That recalls the nights, we sat and talked,
And kicked the sand as we walked.

Let's drink a distant cup my friend,
To days gone by and hearts that mend.

And take a moment to stop a while,
And think of summer nights, and smile.

The Mocking Bird

By Ernie Cohen Sept.2006

Under a radiant summer sun
Amidst a garden's fragrant blooms,
A mocking bird sings his song

Though sunrays heat the mid-day air
None touch his heart,
For she will not be there.

Did she leave him,
To journey south,
Before the winter wind?

Or was it one starry night?
When dreams of her first flight,
Over meadows warm and bright,
Awakened her delight.

Perhaps he would not be alone,
If he could match the nightingale.
But, his humble song must fail,
To reach that purest tone.

Yet, despite a broken heart,
He sings the songs he's told,
And to his simple brain,
Its tones are as pure as gold.

Valentine Day

By Ernie Cohen Feb. '08

*Winter suns are weak,
And barely warm our face.
While winter winds are cold,
And force our hearts to race.*

*Winter makes you patient
And hardens the sleeping seed
That lays quietly in the earth,
Waiting there to breed.*

*We also wait as rains turn to snows.
We talk of sweet things
When the bad weather goes.
We'll eat red cherries,
And scoops of ice cream,*

*Like a couple of kids,
On a winning team.
You'll be the captain, I'll be the coach.
We'll win every game.
And feel no shame.*

*That we still can romance,
And feel our hearts pound.
When I hold you close,
And the only sound, is two old timers,
Making whoopee again,
A graying robin,
And a pretty brown wren.*

Prologue to poems about Prayer and Cemeteries

When you have lived to a relatively old age you experience the deaths and funerals of many of your close friends and loved ones. Four of the poems in this group were written under those circumstances. They express our sadness at there deaths and the happiness their lives brought us.

The fifth poem, “A Prayer in Perilous Times”, has its own prologue. Originally it included a prayer for Senator George Mitchell who was asked by the president and Secretary of State in 2005, to help negotiate a peace treaty between Israel and the Palestinians. He had been successful in Ireland a decade earlier, but his support was undercut by our congress and he was forced to resign.

A Memorial Day

By Ernie Cohen June 2009,
Modified Feb. 2010 & Aug, 2011

A gentle breeze blew flags and flowers,
set besides the graves
in honor, love, and remembrance.

She is buried at the far end,
In land reserved for inter-faiths,
And those who chose to join them.

The ground had sunk where she lay,
And there the grass had stopped,
Leaving a humble patch of earth.

But high above those silent graves,
Against a clear and brilliant sky,
Vapor trails mark a lofty site.

.
Where clouds and sunbeams play,
There, she watches and waits,
for friends to appear some day.

For My Tombstone

by Ernie Cohen June 11, 2013

We sometimes failed, but did our best;
And now we lie in eternal rest.

A Prayer in Perilous Times

By Ernie Cohen June 2009

He who creates and destroys nations,
Who raises up and brings down kings,
Who gave courage to David and wisdom to Solomon,
Bless, and protect, the President, and Vice President, and their
wives and children.

Inspire their administration to protect us,
While they search for ways to bind us together,
And promote justice in our nation and beyond.

Help them to bring change to America.
For we have placed the pleasures of material things,
And the desires of possessions above our spiritual value.

And as we pray for the welfare of our government,
We also pray that you help all those who work for peace,
between the descendents of Abraham's two sons, Isaac
and Ishmael,

“That their offspring may live in peace in your land
for the sake of all your people.”

Amen.

Soccer Fields

by Ernie Cohen, modified Feb. 2013

Fall is the time for soccer and remembering;
Names and faces sitting along the sidelines
On warm grass and plaid, woolen blankets.

“Look, our team's got the ball!
Pass it on, pass it on;
Oh no! They lost it.”

Grandmas' hearts beat with pride,
Each time their team kicks the ball.
Grandmas love soccer
Even more than the players do.

Good bye, team. Good bye, grandma.
Maybe we'll be watching them again,
Sitting on a soft, fluffy, white cloud,
And shouting “Pass it on, team; pass it on.”

My Friend, Al

by Ernie Cohen April 2013

I called him, Big Al;
His family called him, Buddha.
Yes, he was big, but it was his heart
and courage that were bigger.

He got around on a motorized chair,
Often riding it over the hilly streets
of our mobile home park.

We talked about politics, gardens,
and the animals that ate our plants.
He introduced me to Irish Spring soap
to keep those critters away.

And, in early Spring to plant the garlic cloves,
And wait until the garlic blossom
rivals the gardenia in its beauty.
And still wait longer, til late fall
before digging the pungent lobes from the earth.

Now, Big Al is joining them; his burial is tomorrow.
God's speed, Al Gaudreau, I'll plant your cloves this Spring.

God is Present at Funerals

By Ernie Cohen

Near to the graves and tombstones.
He comes closer when the mourners arrive.

He sees their tears, and knows what's in their hearts.
He listens to the clergy's words:
“For everything there is a season.”

He watches as the casket is lowered'
He hears the praises for the departed.
And knows his children are not perfect.

He accepts their imperfections, and expects no less from us..
His commandments are our guide.

He lingers after the mourners leave,
He will attend and protect the dead;
For us it is the living.

Prologue to Poems about Humor and Fun

As most of you know who have youngsters of your own or young grandchildren, they love to hear and tell riddles and jokes. I remember when I was eight or nine listening to Bob Hope, Jack Benny, and Groucho Marks on the radio. I would memorize their jokes and tell them at school the next day. So, it was a treat for me to interact with the group of children at my synagogue after Sabbath services and share their jokes. This stirred me to compose most of the poems that appear in this category. I hope you'll like them possibly as much as the children did.

A Double Whammy

by Ernie Cohen Jan. 2011

We got hit with a double whammy,
Two snowstorms in one day.
The widow down the street paid twice.

The old man shoveled and shoveled again,
And saved a buck, maybe ten.
I heard more snow is on the way.
I guess that's life, there's not much more
that you can say.

Ants and Rainbows

by Ernie Cohen Spring, 2013

I've seen black ants, and red ants,
And brown ants, and even white ants;
But, I've never seen a blue ant. "Have you?"

I've seen a dog with two different colored eyes,
And a cat with a two toned face.;
But I've never seen a blue ant.

I've seen a caterpillar change into a butterfly,
And a tadpole change into a hopping frog,
But I've never seen a blue ant.

Once, I saw a four leaf clover,
And rose whose petals were blue,
But when will I see a blue ant?

Perhaps my brother, Frank, can help me.
Frank thought for a long moment,
"Try looking in a paint factory."

My mother told my sister,
That Frank was very smart;
So that's where I looked.

Maybe it wasn't nature
that made that ant blue,

But, there it was as blue as violets in spring time.

And there were green ants, and yellow ants,
And even three toned ants,

All along the floor, and making a perfect rainbow.

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Be Bop Sal

By Ernie Cohen Jan. 2011

I'm Be Bop Sal,
I'm a Hip Hop Gal,
I'm their Face Book Pal.

I'm an Apple Topper,
I'm an I-Pad Hopper,
I'm a Cell Phone Stopper.

I'm an E-Mail Tom,
I'm a Cool Dot Com,
I'm Both their Mom.

My school's a chore,
My books are a bore,
My feet are sore.

I'm Daisy Mae,
I'm a Guy named Abner,
Who gets away.

My teacher's a square,
He has no hair,
His head is bare.

I'm going to be a hacker,
And stay at home,

I'll sleep late and live alone.

My brother goes to college,
My sisters a queen,
I'm the guy in between.

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Glasses

by Reba Estra April, 1963

There you sit, here I sit,
Both fiddling with our glasses,
Because we need altered vision
to see different friends.

Why shouldn't we decide,
Once and for all, who counts,
The printed ones with the doted "i"s,
Or the friends whose "I"s are capitalized.

How often we shut down our eyes,
And look the other way.
Would we be so compromised,
If we both looked up and bifocalized?

Numbers

by Ernie Cohen May 2013

Two and two make four,
Except when they make twenty two;
It all depends on your point of view.

One and seven can make eight,
Except when they make seventeen;
It all depends on what's in between.

Zeroes are the strangest thing;
They means that nothing's there,
Even after you've looked everywhere.

What is nothing if it doesn't exist,
And it's not in any place:
It's gone and left an empty space.

And negative are less than zeros,
And represent a loss.

So keep your numbers positive;
Far from zeroes and negatives,
And don't let a day slip by,
Without some kind words to say.

Other Neighbors

by Ernie Cohen Aug. 2007

Yesterday, a furry cat sat on a near by wall,
It gave a yawn, stretched, and turned into a ball.

Today, a red tailed hawk watched me digging in the ground,
Suddenly, it rose, took off, and let out an eerie sound.

Later, I thought I saw a mountain lion when the light was dim,
It jumped a stone wall, its body ghostly thin.

At dusk, a deer stopped by my home,
We stared awhile, and then, I was alone.

To Fred Little on his Seventy Seventh Birthday

by Ernie Cohen May 2004

Seventy seven is a very good age,
Why, if you were a wine you'd be quite the rage.

Or if you were a turtle in a big hard shell,
You'd move even slower and be young as well.

And if you were a mountain with your top covered white.
You'd keep your cool whatever the fight.

So, to all of you here at this special time,
I'm glad he's my buddy, and that's the end of this rhyme.

Turkeys To Tess on her Seventh Birthday

by Ernie Cohen Jan. 2003

If turkeys could talk to you and me,
What would they tell us in secrecy?

Would they tell us they sleep in trees ,
Away from foxes and coyotes?

And would they tell us about their leader,
And why they all come to my bird feeder?

Would they tell us why they're up with the sun,
And what they play when they want some fun?

Maybe it's best they don't tell us at all,
And let us wonder at their harrowing call.

Prologue to Poems about Family and Friends

This group of poems deals with some of our deepest feelings. Rita's poem about giving birth expresses her thoughts about this personal experience. In Rita's allegorical poem "Planting" the images of a man planting a tree parallels a mother's care in raising her children.

The poem "A Crying Rain" was written after a dear friend could no longer handle her falling down and gave in to leaving her home and independence. She is in a nursing home and doing quite well; we now see each other several times a month, a time we both look forward to. "A child's heart" was written during the political struggles of 2008 through 2010, to expand health care coverage in the US.

A Child's Heart

by Ernie Cohen Jan 2011

A child's heart is filled with hope,
with laughter tears, and love,
A heart as pure as a dove.

Sometimes nature has no soul,
And marks that heart with a hole.
A tear, an opening in the heart,
can end a life before the start.

Even repaired, they place a sign
on an insurance ledger's line.
Their stocks and bonds control our land,
The health of all is in their hand.

Look for ways to broaden care,
That bring new hope and lessen despair.
Take care of the child, our dearest treasure,
And reap rewards from God's own ledger.

A Crying Rain

by Ernie Cohen July 2012

It rained the day they took Sophie away.
She had come home the night before
 from the emergency room.
I had waited on her porch for the taxi to come.
Later we watched the Red Sox
 until I went home.

Next morning, early, she called something was wrong.
I tried to make her breakfast, but she didn't want it.
I couldn't do anything to help her get started.
She called 911 and the ambulance arrived.
I kissed her and she told me to go.

Her daughter said they're looking for a convalescence home.
I miss her tonight and will miss her more.
Today, I rode my bike to her house as in the past.
As I turned to leave, it rained a little harder,
Not a soaking rain, more like a crying rain.

Labor

by Reba Estra April 1963

I am aware of pain, of time;
But they ignores me, refusing to flick their fingers,
And erase time quickly,
As I cry, in my need to end the pain.

It comes, and I melt in the furnace sheets
Until, flick, a minute, pause, pain.

A spider weaves lace in a corner,
Where tomorrow's duster will brush it away.
But she will weave again, because she must,
And I must bear the pain!

I call, and they come;
Cool hands explore my pain.
Click, bars lock me in,
 in bed with my pain.

They talk about the Graduation on the lawn.

I hear starch rustle as they move,
They tell of the Madonna's blind smile,
And the colorful flower lying at her feet,
 amid the painful stones.

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Then once more they check to find me ready,
To take my final ride, to the white tiled temple,
Down the empty hall while the child within me,
Continues its pain-stalking passage into womanhood.

Mother to Her Child

by Reba Estra April, 1963

In a warm gown and cold feet,
She stood in the dark beside a door,
Shaking a flash light to make it work,
And I asked what she was looking for.

She shed my words with a flannel shrug,
But I knew what she would not say,
Remembering my own dark searching
out of secrets, the same silent way.

When I was five I shaped the room,
Full of nebulous angles into a form,
And imagined I could really see
all that was bright, and loved, and warm.

When I was ten I waited for sleep
To drape the house in privacy,
And wandered to surprise the corners
Hoping to catch what eluded me.

By fifteen I already knew so many answers
I no more bothered to ask the question,
That had become a childish bore.

At twenty the question made a return,
But hid itself behind a milk-white veil
and the blindness of a bride's world of self and silk.

43

In the many sentiment nights
That since have come and gone,
The question became like a thread woven
 into my life, the warp that I live on.

So I fixed the flashlight with a twist,
And placed it into the reaching hand,
Turning I whispered of love and luck,
And left her to discover her own strand.

Planting

by Reba Estra April, 1963

He's planting trees again.
His knotted hands artfully layer up the earth
around two dormant promises,
Both with white petals falling
in the fragrant melted air.

He steps back thoughtfully,
Wiping his earth-stained hands on earth-stained thighs.
He sees the the fruit gleaming,
Held high and ripe
on twigs that barely reach past his knees.

He can hear the apples crunch.
And tastes the tartness on his tongue.
He knows his harvest prematurely.

I envy his clear dream,
While I cultivate mine with care and love.
But my yield must remain uncertain.
For I am not gifted to foresee
the harvest of my children' maturity.

St. Patrick Day

by Ernie Cohen March 2009

Born on St Patrick Day in the first year of the 20th century
to Jewish parents who spoke only Yiddish and Russian.
The youngest of four boys, his brothers left home before he
graduated high school.

During the First World War he made parts for rifles,
shopped for his mother, and helped pay the bills.
Later, when she was dying, he was her nurse as well.

He worked, saved, bought a store, and married my mother.
He called the store “Jules Shop for Men” only forty feet long and
ten feet wide, but right on Main Street.

Two years later the depression started; it was 1929!

They had three children in seven years before she was stricken
with double pneumonia.
He had to board us in different towns, but managed to keep the
flat.
He work six days a week, and visited all of us on Sunday.

She came home after a year and a half. He worked, paid all the
bills, bought her a house, and sent us to college.

Born on St Patrick Day one hundred and nine years ago,
And I'll celebrate his Birthday today.

46

Two Different Times

by Ernie Cohen June '07

*Part1, The end of World War II saw a starving Europe.
Where once, tractors and plows turned the soil,
Now tank tracks and bomb craters pockmarked the fields.
Americans heard their cries.*

*The Friendship Train left L. A. sixty years ago.
It traveled through Oklahoma and Idaho.
While crowds waved in jubilant mood,
It only stopped to bring on food.
For a hungry Europe was standing by,
Americans had heard their cry.*

***At East coast docks the boxcars arrive.
Filled with food so Europe would survive.
Flags were raised and the banners wave,
As the loaded ship set forth to save.***

Part2, Sixty years later another war rages;
This time in the Middle East.
And American soldiers are dying there.

The caskets arrived each solemn day,
Bringing them home from far away.
Back to a place where they can stay.

**Processions move along Main Street
Led by comrades in perfect beat.
Families and friends gather at the wake,
Many with tears, their hearts now break.
*Heroes and soldiers with bodies once sound,
Their caskets are lowered into the ground.***

47

***Part 3, Remember the train, and the soldiers we knew.*
Both mean America, so faithful and true.**

Prologue to Poems about Politics and Struggles

This series of poems reflects my deep concerns with politics and the struggles for freedom and human rights by oppressed peoples. I have been a liberal during most of my life and have raised my voice against the abuse of power by governments that mainly represent powerful groups and privileged minorities.

Writers and poets throughout the ages have had similar concerns and have used their pens to address them. I would like to humbly join them with this series of poems.

Jenny Kissed Me

by Ernie Cohen Jan. 2010

Based on a poem by James Henry Leigh Hunt pub. 1838

Jenny kissed me, Jenny kissed me,
Jumping up from where she sat.
Like a breeze that blows in summer,
Jenny kissed me, long ago.

They locked me in their prisons,
And taken the light away.
Still they could not crush this spirit,
That still burns for liberty.

Say I'm tired of fighting tyranny,
Still, this knee does not bend.
Say I'm Yankee, say I'm English,
Say I have no country.

And count me among the others
Whose pen is weaponry,
Where brave men stand for freedom,
That's where my heart will be.

Time you thief who loves the sweet,
Please, list these treasured words:
“Jenny kissed me, Jenny kissed me,
A long, long time ago.”

49

Now I’m old, and now I’m weary,
Health and wealth have passed me by.
But before you end my story,
Say, Jenny kissed me, long ago.

50

The Ride on 95

By Ernie Cohen about 2007

My Geo's taking me home over long stretches of Highway 95,
That crosses the Connecticut River and cuts through the rolling hills
of Eastern Connecticut.

My restless mind keeps bringing up images beyond
the long straight highway.
And from the corners of my eyes, I see rows of motionless cedars,
Standing silently like soldiers in dark green uniforms,
soon to march into battle.

Behind the cedars stand rows of leafless trees their once full branches,
now empty.
Bringing images of mothers and wives now waiting anxiously.

Further back scattered over the rolling hills, boulders left by bygone glaciers,
lie ready to mark the graves of the dying in a war they did not choose.

While fractured cliffs cut from ledges to form the highway
bleed congealed blood frozen in space and white from the cold.

The soldiers did not start this war, and cedars do not grow in sand,
Only oil wells, and the minds of greedy men.

Two Bearded Men

By Ernie Cohen, Nov. 2008

A bearded Jew boarded a plane headed for Europe.
The only vacant seat was next to a bearded Arab reading a copy of the Koran.
The Jew sat down, and after a while without turning his head said, “shalom.”
The Arab without turning his head replied, “shalom.”
Neither said another word until somewhere over the Atlantic,

As the plane bounced wildly in the midst of turbulent and repeated updrafts,
the Jew spoke first, “Would you mind if I held onto your arm?”
The Arab who had been praying ardently looked up and said, “I was just
going to ask you.”
As darkness descended thunder and lightning now joined the turbulence.
The two men sat quietly, holding hands through the storm.
In the morning as they departed from the plane,
The Arab spoke first, “shalom.”
The Jew replied, “shalom.”

***Moral of the story, “It is better to hold hands with your
enemy than to piss in your pants.”***

Yitzhak and Yasser

By Ernie Cohen, Jan. 2009

Two brave men from countries torn,
Shook hands on the White House lawn.
Each, a solemn oath was sworn,
To bring light to hopes forlorn.

Across the violent seas of hate.
with no signs or buoys for guides,
Each took an oar to move his side,
Each became the others mate.

Two brave men took up the challenge,
Even though the odds were long.
Stood for peace amid curse and taunt
Faced the anger from the throng.

United in their quest for peace,
went home where they would die.
Standing firm in a violent land
They did not fail to try.

Gave their lives in a land gone blind,
That would not hear or see.
Where fences rise creating hates,
And fearful men control the gates.

If you can hear the cries,
of children in the street,
Crying from their broken hearts
to parents at their feet.

If you can see the soldiers guns,
The rockets rising up,
Shout out from heavens lofty heights,
Or from hells fiery lights.

Tell the world it must look here.
Where God spoke to children dear.
Where temples rose and angels sang,
Tell the world its time to change.

Abraham's Two Sons

by Ernie Cohen March 18, 2013

Oh Father Abraham, “Why did you do it?”
You say, “God told you to listen to Sarah.”
Instead of brothers brought up together,
As Jacob's sons were,
Issac's and Ishmael's descendents
are at each others throats.
Brotherly hate has replaced brotherly love .

It all started when Sarah asked you to expel Ishmael,
Whose mother she had given to you as a concubine.
Abraham, you sent them into the desert with only bare
rations.
Wasn't that a thoughtless and cruel act?
So next time Sarah asks you to do such a cruel thing,
Just say, “No!”

Prologue to Poems on Biblical Themes

This group of poems derive from internal and spiritual reactions rather than from external experiences. When our innermost thoughts come out through poetry it allows us to express them. Otherwise our inner thoughts and feelings might have no outlet and could remain trapped inside our minds forever.

MOSES

by Ernie Cohen, Feb. 2010

Who was the man named Moses,
The reluctant prophet of God?
Born of a Hebrew slave,
Who made bricks with reeds and sod.

She in desperation, cast him away,
To save whom the Pharaoh would slay.
Now plucked from waters of the Nile,
He, lie unmarked as a Hebrew child.

Raised by a prince in Pharaoh's court,
Adorned with pageant and with sport.
Why then did he slew the Egyptian,
Was it his or was it God's volition?

Now banished for his crime,
He wanders to a distant clime.
There sees a maiden drawing water,
She was a Median priest's daughter.

She led him to her father's tent,
Where marriage and family made him content.
To live in peace, and a quiet life,
Away from conquests and palace strife.

But the Hebrew God had another plan,
Why did it fall upon this man?
A bush that burned called his name.
Was it death or an eternal flame?

He listened and heard a voice command,
“Lead my people to the promised land.
I am the God of your fathers to whom I swore,
They would be my prophets and carry my law.”

“What is your name I know not you?”
“I am who I am, some call me Yahweh.”
“If this is be my fate, tell me your plan,
For Pharaoh is strong and a haughty man.”

“First I will make pharaoh bend
With signs and wonders I will send.”

Yet still Pharaoh would not sway.
God works in mysterious ways.
Not until his first born died
Was pharaoh’s heart pierced inside.

The Hebrews gathered in disbelief,
Was it freedom or a greater grief?
Now began that treacherous journey,
A people in bondage suddenly set free.

A multitude in great haste departed,
With sand ahead of each course they charted.
First they went south almost to Ethan,
But, the Lord had still another plan.

Their paths would bring them to the Sea of Reeds,
Where Pharaoh's army would avenge their misdeeds.
There waters impervious blocked their flight,
And they had no arms with which to fight.

But where armies are led by lusting men,
The Hebrew God His wonders would send.
The waters parted, they crossed on dry land,
Not so the armies, that was not the plan.

For chariots and riders are no match for Yahweh,
When His anger is arouse whole armies He slew.
For as they pursued with lusting to kill,
The waters closed, it was God's will.

The Hebrews cheered as the chariots drown,
Not a man or a horse, alive was found.
Moses held up his hands and stopped their cry,
For God is sad when so many must die.

Then slowly he spoke, "Let us ever remember,
How Yahweh made Pharaoh surrender.
You shall honor it in each generation,
And eat unleavened bread in veneration.

And the youngest shall ask if he's able,
That you retell the story at your table.
Wherefore this night differs from all others?
Then tell the story of Moses and his brothers."

And never forget what He did for you,
When you were slaves with hopes so few.
"And your first born you shall give to Me,
For I slew theirs so yours would go free."

Samson and Time

By Ernie Cohen Feb. 2010

Time, a non-spatial continuum,
With symbols that tell a minimum.
Did Sampson know time, captive and blind,
Chained to a wheel and made to grind?

Between the pillars he was bond,
At the base of the Temple Dagon.
Thousands above, others below,
He prayed that his strength would grow.

A youth endowed with strength divine,
His faith had not grown with time.
Like many before by fate betrayed
Time answered him as he prayed.

His hair now reached his shoulder.
The Philistine's taunts grew bolder.
We're told there is a time for all,
A time to rise, a time to fall.

He stretched his arms, felt the roof sway.
Ten thousand lords he slew that day.
Some find faith at an early age,
For Sampson it came on his last page.

Pg. 58

By Ernie Cohen © June 2009

A gentle breeze blew flags and flowers,
Carefully set besides the graves,
To remember those departed.

She's buried at the far end,
In land reserved for inter faiths,
And those who chose to join them.

The ground had sunk where she lay
And there the grass had stopped,
Leaving a humble patch of earth.

But high above the graves,
Against a clear, blue sky,
Vapor trails marked a heavenly site

.
Our lives are often scarred and bruised,
We live with pain and cares.
But in the air above the land,
Where stars and sunbeams play,
She waits and has a spot,
For friends to come someday.

Thanksgiving Morning

By Ernie Cohen © nov.09

Alone I watch a silent, chalky mist filling the forest,
Where tree trunks curved and bent
Rise up, like fingers on an arthritic limbs
The forest boundary, piles of oak leaves,
Raked there to stand against the coming winds.

Two thin boughs above the piles,
Each with leaves still clinging,
If leaves still cling, despite the ripping autumn winds,
Then I will give thanks on this November day.
And renew my dimmed hopes in nature's revolving play.

A child's Heart
by ernie Cohen © Jan 2011

A child's heart is filled with hope
With laughter tears, and giving love,
A heart as pure as a dove.

Sometimes nature has no soul,
And marks that heart with a hole.
A tear, an opening in the heart,
Can end a life before the start.

Even repaired they place a sign.
On the insurance ledger's line.
Their stocks and bonds control our land,
The health of all is in their hand.

Take care of the child, our dearest treasure,
And reap rewards from God's own ledger.

A Colleague Remembers Reba (Mrs. Estra)

By Mort Krieger, Kelly Junior High, 1962-2001

Edited by Ernie Cohen June 2012

Having spent nearly forty years of my life teaching at Kelly Junior High School, now Kelly Middle School, I met and worked with a very diverse and special group of people. The one colleague I will most remember for her compassion, intelligence, and honesty is Reba Estra.

Case in Point: for approximately ten years Kelly had a drill team, Kelly's Marching Pride. From 1985 – 1994, this drill team won numerous trophies, plaques, and awards in parades throughout New England. The drill team consisted of approximately fifty, seventh and eighth graders, most of

whom Mrs. Estra had taught in her remedial classes.

One morning I received a call from the Superintendent of the Norwich Public Schools, William Juzwic, to come to his office. “Oh, oh!” I thought, “Trouble.” Bill handed me a special delivery letter containing an Invitation to the Welcome – Back – the – Troops – Parade in New York City. However, in order to participate I, as Director of the drill team, had to submit within twenty-four hours in writing and on video tape a completed resume’ of the Pride’s history. Needless to say as a math teacher, my skills do not lie in the written word. At first, I was at a loss for what to do. Then, I remembered Reba and her reputation for helping other teachers write letters to students’ parents about troubles in the classroom.

Reba became my savior! Not only did she drop everything she was doing but, she single handily developed the resume’. And we were accepted into the fold. Just prior to the Parade we found out that we could not march because for insurance purposes, all our team had to be sixteen or older. However, we had the satisfaction of knowing that our young team had the honor of being accepted.

Reba was right. Her remedial students who made up a large portion of our team may not have excelled in word composition or spelling, but they excelled in many other areas of life that required coordination and manual dexterity. Our team gave them a chance to excel for their school, and Reba’s encouragement and support was a part of their successes.

A Double Whammy
By Ernie Cohen © Jan. 2011

We got hit with a double whammy,
Two snowstorms in one day.

The widow down the street paid twice,
The old man shoveled again,
And saved a buck maybe ten.

Two chickadees came for breakfast,
And ate the crumbs off the porch.
I ate mine along with them.

I heard more snow is on the way.
I guess that's life, what can you say.

A Memorial Day

By Ernie Cohen © June 2009,
Modified Feb. 2010
& Aug, 2011

A gentle breeze blew flags and flowers,
Set besides the graves,
In honor, love, and remembrance.

She is buried at the far end,
In land reserved for inter-faiths,
And those who chose to join them.

The ground had sunk where she lay,
And there the grass had stopped,
Leaving a humble patch of earth.

But high above those silent graves,
Against a clear and brilliant sky,
Vapor trails mark a lofty site.

Where clouds and sunbeams play.
There, she watches and waits,
For friends to come one day.

An Early Birthday Greeting

By Ernie Cohen

**It's birthday time again so I hope you will not mind,
That I've taken up my pen to send you a rhyme.**

**There're things you can do you couldn't do before,
Like lying in bed till noon, and the hell with any chore.
You can meditate all day which the mahas rightly say,
Is the proper thing to do when you're seventy four.**

**Although these lines lack the elegant phrase,
So I shan't receive your praise,
Still, my best wishes on your birthday,
And enjoy my try at play.**

A Mid November Day

By Ernie Cohen November 2006

The scene outside is gray on this mid November day.
Dead leaves, damp and brown lay in mats across the ground.

Tree trunks, like bent fingers point at the cloud filled sky.
And only a forsythia bush breaks this somber view.

A forsythia whose leaves have turned to dull, burnt yellow.

Not like early spring's when its blossoms matched the sun.

But still a reminder in our waning years,
Some memories will last into our winter days.

A Prayer in these Perilous Times

By Ernie Cohen © June 2009

He who creates and destroys nations, who raises up and brings down kings, who gave courage to David and wisdom to Solomon, bless, protect, and help the President of the United States, and the Vice President, and their wives and children. And inspire their administration to protect us, while they search ways to heal our wounds and promote justice in our nation and beyond.

Help them to bring change to America for we have placed the pleasures of material things and the desire of possessions above our spiritual values and our humanity.

And as we pray for the welfare of our government, we also pray that you help the peacemaker, Senator Mitchell in his efforts to bring together the descendents of Abraham and his two sons Isaac and Ishmael, to live in peace in your land for the sake of all the people.

Amen.

A QUESTIONING NATURE**

OUR ENVIRONMENT HOW WE USE IT AND ABUSE IT

Produced By Ernie Cohen Ph. D.

Title By Reba Estra Cohen

Doubt that stars are burning

*Doubt the sun is turning.
Doubt that truth never lies
But doubt not thine own eyes.*

Ernie Cohen

Format & Topics

Topic will be chosen from current events and listeners suggestions except for the first show which will introduce how the environmental movement got started and what it has accomplished.

Guests participation both professional, students and lay people will be invited as guest to participate.

December 3, 2007

Script

Opening Music And Pictures

Topic One: Global Warming

Skepticism Based on economics and self interest

Oil and auto industry

Distrust of scientists

Uneducated

Choices:

Do nothing continue burning fossil fuel(what if we're wrong)

Enact strict laws on behavior and free choice (War time)

Act Voluntarily

Set reasonable goals for alternate energy, and conservation.

(oil at \$100+ per barrel)

Droughts, forest fires, Storms, Floods, People at risk.

Topic 2 Local Politics

Meeting with Art Lathrop

Accomplishments: Wauregan Hotel, Otis Library, Three Rivers consolidation(Disagree, ignored regional opportunities)

Dodd Stadium Coasting the City Money every year

Poor government administration

Planning and Zoning

Pot Holes

Scattering of efforts

Secrecy

The White Forest

By Ernie Cohen © Jan. 2010

Have you ever seen so white a forest? I hadn't until today.

I mean pure white from a new fallen snow, that sits on every branch, lacy and fluffy like the purest whipped cream, spread on freshly baked apples for the holidays.

It takes a special time to have it come out right. First the winds have to cooperate and go away for a while. Then, the right combination of moisture and temperature are needed to create the flake size and coherence so they cling to every twig and fill in every void.

Sometimes an occasional breeze high up in the tops will cause the delicate coating to loosen and plunge to earth like a team of female divers in skin-tight, white suits diving in unison. Or the tufted titmouse in search of his morning breakfast while hopping from branch to branch with a few friends disturbs a patch so it tumbles down. But there's far and enough snow to last, and I shall fill my eyes and heart with the white forest here today.

By Charlie O'Neil 2009

A Wise Person Said:

Before You Do “It”

Consider These Seven Words:

Will “It” Help Get Me To Hereafter

An Apple on a Table

*By Ernie Cohen Copywrite Jan. 2008
Mod. 8.11*

Like white sheets stretched out to dry

Snow lies thinly on the ground.

Sunlight barely on my window,

I feel winter’s, silent sound.

Why this sudden chill as if

Something’s rattling the gate?

The fuel man raises his prices,

The banker his interest rate.

*An apple ripened last fall,
Sits on my table.*

*“Can you lighten my cares?
Please, speak if you are able.”*

*“I’m here for you, and waiting.
Come, open up my shell.
Smell my delicate fragrance,
Bite me, I won’t yell.”*

*Just like a friend’s warm greeting
You give yourself away.
You’ve calmed my anxious moments,
And eased the cares of day.*

*You’ve let me taste you sweetness,
And caused my soul to mend.
You brightened a troubled spirit,
Whose head would not bend.*

Twentieth Anniversary Rhyme

By Ernie Cohen© 10/2/11

As we lay dozing in our chairs,
Chores all done and no more cares.
A vision came through the pane,
Dressed in velvet with a golden chain.

Across its back it wore a quiver,
With three arrows, tipped in silver.
In its hand a bow of ivory,
And wore a cap to one side wily.

And as it flew across the room,
It sang and danced to this tune:
“Would you sleep, while others play?
I’ll fill your heart with love today.

Have you forgotten those summer nights?
When moon beams were the only light,
You held her close and she held tight.

I’ve come from a distant moon,
To welcome you to my tribe.
 and
He will always be your groom
And she your precious bride.

Inspirations

By Ernie Cohen © April 2011

An inspiration can suddenly appear,
Like sunrise above the eastern hills.
If not that moment grasped and held,
It fades like sunset at eventide.

You have a friend to hear your thoughts,
A friend, on whom you can rely.
And then one day when not aware,
A friend can die.

You had a love so strong and true,
Whose warmth and touch was just for you.
So cherish the thought, the friend, the love,
Grasp them, touch them, and record.

An Old Fashion Winter

By Ernie Cohen, © Jan. 2009

Mod. 8/11

It's an old fashion winter,
Like long ago.
The storms keep coming,
With blow after blow.

The roads are packed,
Potholes filled tight.
Branches are frosted,
Each painted white.

You take a shovel, clear the walk,
You do it again, hardly talk.
After a while you do it blind,
After a while it numbs the mind.

For when the air is really cold
It freezes sap and kills the mold.
And offers a chance for us to find,
A thought or line that almost rhymed.

It offers time to call old friends,
And tell old jokes once more again.
Good night for now, these thoughts will keep
For I must stop to get some sleep.

Feeling of helplessness and disbelief that is pervading many Americans have partly been the impetus for Barack Obama's unprecedented popularity and successes in the 2008 election campaign. Is it too much to expect that a forty-seven year old activist and one term senator can change the growing despair? No one yet knows the answer. The odds makers probably rate his chances at less than 50%. So why do I support him over the older and long time Senator, John Mc Cain. Its not that I don't have high regard for Mc Cain, because I do. In fact in 2.000, I became a Republican so I could vote for him in the primaries. It's that I truly believe we need an almost clean sweep in Washington. Does the

fact tha Obama grew up with four heritages, white; black; Christain; and Muslim
give him the needed insights?

I will take my chances with Obama and pray that his vision for change, his
capacity to be open to other's points of view and his reputed and visible high
level of intelligence will carry us through to a better but different America.

Be Bop Sal

By Ernie Cohen Jan. 2011

I'm a Be Bop Sal,
I'm a Hip Hop Gal,
I'm their face book Pal.

I'm an Apple Topper
I'm an I Pad Hopper,
I'm a Cell Phone Stopper.

I'm an E-Mail Tom,
I'm a Cool Dot Com
I'm Both their Mons.

My school's a bore,
My girl wants more,
My feet are sore.

We had a play,
About Daisy Mae,
And a Guy named Abner,
Who runs away.

My teacher's a Square,
He has no Hair,
His head is bare.

I'm going to be a Hacker,
And break their Code,

All their secrets I'll Download.

My brother goes to College,
My sisters a Queen,
I'm the guy that's in Between.

Changes

By Ernie Cohen Copyright, March 2008, Modified 2.10.9

My bones are stiff, my spirit sags
So low, there're barely off the ground
Three months of cold and failing light,
Winter days have brought me down,

I look toward nature for a sign,
That what is now will pass
Then in my window, beyond its glass,
A sight to warm the heart
The birds came back today."

Like wind blown leaves they cross my lawn
In bunches drab and brown.
Led by the wrens that hop about,
And peck the melting ground.

Two robins deciding to join in,
And a blue bird darts forth,
Lift my spirit and bring a smile,
Spring will be here in a while.

In woods where matted leaves still lay,
Winter still retains its shades of gray.
Yet, I'll believe in change,
For 'the birds came back today'.

I Didn't Ask for It

© July '09 By Ernie Cohen

I didn't ask for those flashy pages tucked into my newspaper,
Cute blonds and brunettes in their bikinis.
Or the picture of the blueberry daze
With whipped cream and a berry on top.

There's lots of things in life we don't ask for,
Like rheumatic fever or three divorces.
Yet, sometimes we get a surprise,
Someone or something that changes our whole life,
And makes us smile all day.

Downwind from the Coal –Burning Power Plants

By Ernie Cohen, Ph. D.

Not all chemistry is in the laboratory. When I left the intellectual atmosphere at Northwestern University after earning a degree in physical chemistry and moved from the mid-west to Connecticut in 1960, I never thought that twelve years later people who lived in the east would be victims of chemicals emitted from power plants located hundreds of miles away. By the 1970's changes in the air and water brought about by chemicals released into the environment were happening.

One of the first things that I noticed was the changes in hydrangea plants that bloomed near my home.. The colors of their blossoms, which had ranged from deep red to pink to pale blue were now, almost entirely blue. There were changes in the sugar maple trees that grew in our neighbor's yards and along the road to the grammar school that my daughter was attending. The top branches were rapidly losing their leaves, leaves that once turned bright orange and red and rivaled the sunsets in early fall. Also, when spring snowmelts coincided with the release of trout into the brooks and streams at the beginning of the fishing season there were reports of large numbers of the trout dying. And then there were the hazy days. Days when particles emitted from stacks and tail pipes reduced the amount of sunlight reaching the earth.

What did this have to do with mid-western power plants, located hundreds, and even thousands of miles away? If there was a connection how could it be demonstrated, and how could it be controlled. Many who were concerned investigated the chemistry,

tested the soils and the wells, went into the ponds and marshes, and crawled through basements to obtain current and historical evidence of the changes occurring. Often the government and even our fellow scientist ignored or opposed us. This all happened over a period of twenty-five years.

But improvements only came slowly. The coal industries, the power producers, and their political allies resisted change. Then in October of 2007, thirty-five years after the effects of acid rain had started, ten eastern states won a 4.6 billion dollar settlement over a large Ohio power company whose acid-forming emissions will now be reduced by over 800,000 tons per year.

Not all chemistry takes place in the laboratory.

How to Fill a Pond

By Ernie Cohen Copyright July 2007

Raindrops fill a pond
Like honey bees fill a hive.
Each drop deepens it,
And keeps it alive.

Ideas are like raindrops,.
Alone they lack punch.
Yet when joined with others,
Their grip becomes a crunch.

Let others see your spark
Send them into the night
Join them with others
And create a new light

And that's the way you fill a pond.

From Leaves of Grass

by Walt Whitman

Stop this day with me and you shall possess the origins of all poems.

You shall possess the good of the earth and the sun.

You shall no longer take things at second or third hand,

Nor look through the eyes of the dead, nor feed on the specter of books.

Nor look through my eyes either or take things from me.

You shall listen to all sides and filter them from thy self.

Prologue

The first genie I came across was sealed inside an urn. What he was doing there, or how he got there, I can't recall; but when the magic phrase "aba cadadra" was spoken he flew out. in a billowing cloud of smoke, his muscles bulging, his head almost in the clouds. And he could do wonderful things, like bring you treasures or rescue a ship in a storm. He was a "good" genie

The second genie lived amidst the black earth of the Allegheny mountains. He was formed over centuries by heat and pressure until his green, leafy body became hard as rock. He is called the coal genie and he supplied the energy for the industries and railroads during the 19th and 20th centuries. Today, he feeds the furnaces of the power plants that produce most of our electricity. But he also has a bad side and can cause the rains to become acid and the wives of the men who dig him out to weep.

But the third genie is the one I want to tell you about. He has been slumbering for millions of years near our shores. He was formed like the coal genie from the lush green plants and trees that covered our continent millions of years ago. However, there is something about him, for he is the wild one!

Genie, by Ernie Cohen © June, 2010.

I am the oil genie that sleeps beneath the ocean's floor.
I have been asleep for millions of years,
Do not disturb me.

Isn't it enough that you rob my brothers and sisters that sleep beneath the deserts, the frozen tundra, and the grassy plains?

That you burned them in your furnaces, separated their parts in your refineries, and cracked their spines to make your gasolines and jet fuels.

But they fought back , though they are not the warier that I am..
They polluted your air, spilled into your rivers, and killed your fish.

They reached toward the heavens and blanked your sky,
Causing your earth to warm, your glaziers to melt,
And your rivers to overflow their banks.

And now you come after me.
With your floating islands, your long teeth,
And your pipes to drain my blood.

But I will teach you a lesson you won't soon forget.
I will wash over your shorelines and stain your beaches.
I will destroy your fisheries, your oyster beds, and your shore birds.

And I will reach in to your boardrooms and humble your CEO's and presidents.
I will reign my terror for ninety days and ninety nights..
For I am the oil genie that sleeps beneath the ocean's floor;
Do not dis6urb me!

Give Us A Break

By Ernie Cohen, Copyright Sept. 08

Gone are the smoked filled rooms,
the cigars, and brass spittoons.

Boss Tweed and Mayor Daly
Instead it's lipstick lady.

It's pants suits and hair piled high,
the clean look, the sparkling eye.

They fought the Old Boy network,
their tears and claws did not shirk.

The women have come they're here to stay,
Will it bring change and a new day?

No one knows, except to say:
“ politics is a game, now all can play.”

GOOD-BYE OLD MAN

By Ernie Cohen © April 2007

Good-bye old man it's time to go.
You've stayed too long, several months or so.

We welcomed you at first, particularly the young,
But even they now say 'go be done.

A lady friend who loves to ski
Was hoping you would make it three.

But when you wept your tears were dry
And gave no snow from out the sky.

Only the cold that stayed and stayed
So now it's time for you to fade.

There's someone waiting at the door
Dressed in green whom we adore.

She's wearing yellow in her hair,
And in her eyes daffodils flare.

On her waist a violet belt,
Made from flowers where she had knelt.

Go, for gentle spring has arrived.

Good-bye old man, we have survived

Jenny Kissed Me Adapted by Ernie Cohen © Jan. 2010

Based on a poem by James Henry Leigh Hunt pub. 1838

Jenny kissed me, Jenny kissed me,
Jumping up from where she sat.
Like a breeze that blows in summer
Jenny kissed me, long ago.

They have locked me in their prisons,
And taken light from my eyes.
Still they could not crush this spirit,
That still burns for liberty

Say I'm tired of fighting tyranny,
But this knee would never bend.
Say I'm Yankee, say I'm Irish,
Say I have no country.

But count my life among the others
Whose pen is their weaponry
Where men stand for love of freedom,
There my heart will always be.

Time you thief who loves the sweet,
Please, list these treasured words:

Jenny kissed me, long ago.

Now I'm old, and now I'm weary,
Health and wealth have passed me by.
But before you end my story,
Say, Jenny kissed me, long ago.

I Had a Hat, I Had a Love

By Ernie Cohen © Feb. 2010

I had a hat that came and went.
It was lying in a parking lot,
One cold and snowy day.

Stitched with threads of many colors,
Purples, blues, and yellows,
With my black jacket it made a pair.

But now it's gone, it disappeared.,
It could be lying on some road,
Or in the wash I'll do today.

Like a love that has gone away
Taking with it its sparkling eyes.
By death, or war, or pride,

I'll not be sad. I'll keep the faith,
That love returns someday,
For nature always finds away.

I still have hope and do believe,
That when I'm least suspecting,

That both will there be waiting.

In Room Two Hundred

In room 200 at Pendelton Cele, my precious *Kohanna*, recovering from surgery said: "It's cold in here." I turned up the "t"-stat and massaged her feet and swollen legs too. She said: "Your hands are warm," and I replied: "So is my heart, just for you gal."

I remembered it was sixty years ago when these same lovely legs and feet brought you coming from church to me, and what a blessing it has been ever since.

Charlie

Inspirations

By Ernie Cohen

April 2011

A thought can suddenly appear,
Like sunrise above the eastern hills.
If not grasped and held that moment,
It fades like the sun at eventide.

Those thoughts that come with day's first light
Can be held if written down.
So place a pad nearby your bed,
Even write them on the mirror.

A friend hears your thoughts,
One, on whom you can rely.
And then one day,
A friend can die.

Friends need attending,
They're not just for you.
They also have worries,
And need a friend too.

A love that's not heard,
Is often not felt.
You have a love, both strong and true,
Whose warmth and touch is just for you.

So cherish the love, the friend, the thought,
Grasp them, touch them, and record.

RAINS FALLING

By Ernie Cohen © March 2009

Lines of rain move across the glass.
As the train moves towards Chicago.
With a pillow against my head,
And shades over my eyes.

From the station I pull my bags
Up escalators and through doors,
As once I pulled my wagon,
Up the steep hills to home.

We toured the new technology labs,
Peered at test tubes of nana salts
Their colors changing with their size
Like seeds into rainbow flowers.

After two days at Northwestern,
On coiling and flexing proteins,
A warm pool felt like a Grecian villa
Where water gushed from painted urns.

Outside the fairways were empty.
Only a soaking, wet golfer,
With his hood pulled tight round his face
Moved like an astronaut in space.

With closed eyes I tuned in his thoughts:
“Green Bay plays football in the snow”
“Why can’t I play golf in the rain.”
It’s O’K with me; it’s O’K.

Memorial Day

By Ernie Cohen Copyright 5/8

Trees and birds filled the cemetery,
Like the home she knew before.

Three cardinals greeted me there,
And pairs of swallows and thrushes.

Gentle breezes blew small flags
Between rows of grass covered graves.

She was buried at the farthest end,
For interfaiths and family sites.

The ground had sunk above her grave,
No grass had made it there.

A bare plot of brown earth and sand
Was all beneath my feet.

But above in a clear blue sky
Two jets had made an “X”

Two long, white vapors crossed,
And marked a heavenly site.

As I drove away, drops appeared

On the right side of the glass.

Call it a mystery or what you will,
I will not even try.

MICHAEL OSER – BACKGROUND

Michael Oser was born in Hungary in 1948, and emigrated to Australia in 1949 where he graduated as a mechanical engineer in 1970. In 1972 he gained a Master of Science degree in process control from the Haifa Technion, and a Master of Engineering Science from the University of New South Wales in 1982 specializing in control systems. He went on to get a Graduate Diploma in Information Technology from the University of Queensland in 1999, and this year completed a Bachelor of Environmental Horticulture degree at Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga.

Michael established his own engineering consultancy for the oil/gas industry in 1982, and has worked as an Instrument and Control Systems specialist for major oil companies in Australia, Israel, Iran, Malaysia, Korea and Vietnam. He is presently consulting for an oil refinery in Sydney and a hazardous area management company in Perth, as well part time consulting for municipal councils for landscape and planting design.

He is spending a week in Connecticut visiting his son and family in Norwich where his son is the Rabbi at the Congregation Brothers of Joseph.

Michael's dream is to organically grow and conduct research on blueberries in Australia's Blue Mountains.

MOSES

By Ernie Cohen © Feb. 2010

Who was the man named Moses,
the reluctant prophet of God?
Born of a Hebrew slave, who
made bricks with reeds and sod

She in desperation, cast him away.
To save whom the Pharaoh would slay.
How plucked from waters of the Nile,
He, lie unmarked as a Hebrew child.

How raised by a prince in Pharaoh's court,
adorned with pageant and with sport.
Why then did he slew the Egyptian,

was it his or was it God's volition?

How banished for his crime,
He wanders to a distant clime..
There sees a maiden drawing water,
She was a Median priest's daughter.

She led him to her father's tent,
Where marriage and family made him content.
To live in peace, and a quiet life,
Away from conquests and palace strife.

But the Hebrew God had another plan,
Why did it fall upon this man.

A bush that burned called his name.
Was it death or an eternal flame?
He listened and heard a voice command,
'Lead my people to the promised land.'

I am the God of your fathers to whom I swore
They would be my prophets and carry my law

What is your name I know not you
I am who I am, some call me Yahew
If this is be my fate, tell me your plan
For Pharaoh is strong and a haughty man

First I will make pharaoh bend
With signs and wonders I will send.
Yet still Pharaoh would not sway.
God works in mysterious ways.
Not until his first born died
Was pharaoh's heart pierced inside.

The Hebrews gathered in disbelief,
Was it freedom or a greater grief?
Now began that treacherous journey
A people in chains suddenly set free

A multitude in great haste departed
With sand ahead of each course they charted
First they went south almost to Ethan
But the Lord had another plan.

The plan would bring them to the Sea of Reeds
Where Pharaoh's army would avenge their misdeeds
The waters impervious blocked their flight
They had no arms with which to fight

But where armies are led by lusting men
The Hebrew God His wonders would send
For chariots and riders are no match for Yahew
When His anger is arouse whole armies He slew.

The waters parted, they crossed on dry land
Not so the armies, that was not the plan
For as they pursued with lusting to kill
The waters closed, it was God's will.

The Hebrews cheered as the chariots drown
Not a man or a horse, alive was found
Moses held his hands and stopped their cry,
For God is sad when so many must die

Then slowly he spoke, Let us ever remember
How Yahew made Pharaoh surrender
You shall honor it in each generation.
And eat unleaven bread in veneration

And the youngest shall ask if he's able
That you retell the story at your table
Wherefore this night differs from others?
Then tell the story of Moses and his brothers

And never forget what He did for you,
When you were slaves with hopes so few.
"And your first born you shall give to me
For I slew theirs so yours would go free."

Neighbors

By Ernie Cohen © March 2011

It' funny how we happened to settle here, I and a red tailed hawk.
I think I was first, cause I didn't see my neighbor for four years.
There was a shrill cry, as ground animals dove for cover.
How gracefully those big wings maneuvered between the trees.
Like skis turning between the poles in a race.

We're good neighbors, only see each other, once or twice a month.
It's usually when my neighbor's swooping down the hill,
Or soaring high above the houses in the winds.
Then, it's nice to know, I got a neighbor between me and heaven.

New Neighbors

By Ernie Cohen © April 2011

My neighbors have arrived,
And been quietly appearing.

Were they away for the winter,
Or just keeping to themselves?

Forsythia appeared first,
Their bright, yellow arms waving hello.

Who made those white spots,
That just appeared outside my window?

They've been busy this winter,
While we complained about the cold.

I'll keep watching those youngsters grow,
Till they cover the ground with white pedals.

Welcome back neighbor; we missed you.

Prologue: Some people are born to solve problems.

She had been hiking at Fort Shantock where the Mohegan Indians once had a village. The village overlooked the Thames River on its way to Long Island Sound. On that day instead of Indians gathering oysters and crabs fishermen were casting lines from the shore. Close to where the fishermen parked their vehicles, deep, muffled sounds repeated and repeated. Turning, she saw a dog tied to a post. Rope had twisted around the dog's neck forcing its head to hang close to the post while a hot July sun beat down on the struggling animal. The fisherman were also looking at the dog, a large black German Shepard, but none of them had moved toward the animal. Mrs. Estra moved quickly; she picked up a pan by the roadside, and filling it with water from a nearby stream approached the animal, talking softly as she moved closer. The animal looked directly into the eyes of the gray haired woman as she *placed the pan near its feet. Then, as Mrs. Estra froze, it lowered its head and drank the water.*

But there was more to be done. The rope was still twisted around the dog's neck. Again she approached the animal. The sun's rays had caused the dog's dark eyes to narrow and its tongue hung loosely between its large, curved teeth. Moving closer she began talking as she gently untwisted the rope, "I see your problem and I will help you."

a At the start of each year Mrs. Estra placed on her desk objects that had attracted her attention on summer hikes. She was particularly attracted to banded rock whose hard surface resembled the arch on a turtles back. The bands, about a quarter of an inch wide, were separated by stripes of dark and light, granular crystals. As she bent over to pick it up she could hardly have known the events that rock would lead to.

As her remedial students headed for the exit door on a hot September day, none seemed to notice the banded rock on their teacher's desk. Standard good byes mixed with their urgent rush to escape to freedom.

"See you tomorrow, Mrs. Estra."

"I'll bring my homework in, Mrs. Estra; I promise."

"So long; keep cool, Mrs. Estra."

And then sounds she least expected to hear: "Nice, nice."

He was the last one to leave, and his remark brought her to attention.

"What did you say?"

"Oh, I just said that's a nice piece of gneiss", pointing to the smooth, banded rock on her desk.

Mrs. Estra could hardly believe her ears. The boy's seat was in the last row next to the window. He always seemed bored and had barely written a few sentences on tests she had given.

"How did you know this rock is gneiss?"

"Oh, I read about it in one of my brother's books."

"Is your brother in high school?"

Nice pg. 2

Nice pg. 3

"Oh no, he's a senior at Virginia Tech; he's going to be a mining engineer."

That evening Mrs. Estra sat a long time at her desk. There was an assortment of teaching tools near by. One tool however, did not belong with the others. It had a hickory handle inserted into a hammer-like head of forged iron, with a four-inch long spike at one end. She had purchased it the summer she completed her master's degree. Her English advisor suggested she take Elizabethan drama but the opportunity to get out of the classroom and her inquisitive nature strongly favored geology. The weapon-like,

spiked hammer was used to chip out geodes and rock specimens at abandoned quarries and ledge out-cropping. Now, one of her poorer students had identified a form of metamorphic rock she had learned to do only after several field trips while at Wesleyan University. The facts did not add up. She needed to get to the bottom of this or she would be troubled for the rest of the year.

Next day during free period she visited the guidance office and requested to see the boy's records. They started in fourth grade when he moved from Oklahoma to Connecticut: 'John is failing to keep up with his class. His work is often incomplete.' The fifth grade report was similar. 'He needs extra help with his work. He only completed two sentences on the essay test. I believe he should be assigned to the remedial class even though his math teacher is impressed with his work.' Similar

Nice pg. 4

comments appeared on his sixth grade record. 'He does not complete his work and often seems withdrawn.' Mrs. Estra closed the file and said nothing to the guidance councilor. She needed more information. Could this student be suffering from a disability that was overshadowing his brightness?

That next day during break she asked John if he would read a few paragraphs from a geology book. The book was the text she had used the summer of 1974, at Wesleyan. Opening the book to Chapter 14, *Metamorphic Rocks*, she handed it to him. He looked at the page turned the book over several times and began reading the second paragraph. It described how metamorphic rocks formed billions of years ago. He finished that paragraph and the two following without missing a word. As he put down the book puzzled looks appeared on both faces.

John was first. "If no one has seen a metamorphic rock forming how do they know how

it forms?”

“They don’t. It’s a past event and is based on the probable effects of pressure and heat on materials thought to be present when the rocks formed. Now, how would you like to tell me why you have trouble keeping up with the regular classes since you read at high school or college level?”

Slowly, he looked up at the teacher. Lines of pain now appeared on his face for the first time. He hesitated for several moments.

“I can read alright, but I can’t write. When I try to, it takes a long time to form letters, and if I rush no one can read it.”

Mrs. Estra thought for just a moment before she spoke.

“Now I understand. I will help you.”

As John left the room, Mrs. Estra smiled. She was glad she had taken geology that summer instead of Elizabethan drama.

The next day she made an appointment with the guidance counselor, Tim Ferro. Tim had helped her when she needed information on a difficult student who showed up in the middle of the year with no transcripts. Teachers also depended on Tim to keep up with most of the new thinking coming from the Secretary of Education. It changed every year and drove me at the scientific name? Tim, I want to use a tape recorder for his test.”

“That sounds reasonable. It would get him through the written parts; the rest is either multiple choice or calculations. How’s his math?”

“Kate says he’s OK with numbers.”

“How about the brass?”

“I’ve a meeting with them tomorrow at 2:30. Will you come and bring reports on dysgraphia?”

“I sure will! This could be a first for our system.”

Mrs. Estra spent the evening correcting homework and planning for the meeting. She

hoped that the principal's own difficulty with writing would help; he always dictated his correspondence. Though she was cautiously optimistic

and looking forward to the meeting she was worried about the assistant principal, a former marine.

Tim and Rita arrived at the principal's office at 2:30

"Well, you two are prompt. Please, wait inside my office while I finish dictating and calling Joyce; she'll be joining us."

The chairs were typical office issue, metal frames with black vinyl seats. When Joyce came in Tim offered his; but she waved him off and grabbed one from the front desk. She still retained the attitudes of her marine training.

"Rita, don't you think all our students ought to be able to write legibly?"

"If they can, Joyce, otherwise they'll use a secretary like the principal."

Tim started to smile until he saw Joyce stiffen her back and clench her left wrist just as the principal walked in.

"Well Rita, we're all here now, so start your sales pitch. I'll sit in back."

Rita related the incidents of the gneiss rock and her college geology text. Tim reviewed the guidance records from prior years and explained dysgraphia as a deficiency in handwriting and not an intellectual impairments. Then Rita again spoke looking directly at the principal.

"I would like your permission to use a tape recorder on the written parts of tests I will be giving in advance of the mastery."

The principal looked slightly uncomfortable and waited till Joyce spoke.

"See here, Rita, we insisted that all our marines write legibly and if they couldn't, they could joined the army or the navy."

"Joyce, these are adolescents not marines. What did you do when a marine suffered

shell shock and couldn't sign his name? When his brain and hand could not talk to each other? That's what dysgraphia is, a break in neural connections, minus the shells." There were several long moments of silence when it seem the students future hung like a beany ball swinging back and forth across the room.

Finally, the principal spoke, "Rita and Tim, I understand the problem, but the timing is not right. Joyce has a point about writing legibly. The superintendent and I were at last night's board meeting and four people from the front complained that they're not able to read their children's writing. The super is now being pressured to recommend penmanship classes in grades two through six. Why don't you contact Kate Collins? She's starting her fall math club in October. Who knows, your student might enjoy it and possibly if he's any good at math like I was he might help the club make the top ten at the regional Math Count contest." We've never been closer than twelfth."

Rita looked at Tim; he was indicating it was time to leave. She paused and then rose to her feet. "Good bye, and thank you for your comments and suggestions. I will carefully consider them. You know, whether we like it or not,

communication is changing. We're entered the digital age. Someday students will be E-mailing and texting messages on their cell phones, and I plan to teach them word processing and graphics on the Apple computers, now."

When Rita entered Tim's office she had to lean against the wall and breath deeply. "Rita, you'll have to bide your time for now. Why don't you call Kate and find out more about the math club. The timing not right."

That night, during supper she told her husband what happened. She had hardly touched her food.

“Rita, I know how much you want to help this student, but you work for the school system, you don’t run it. Give the principal’s idea a chance. I met Kate Collins at the Coast Guard Academy when I was a proctor at last year’s Math Count contest. She had her club up for a possible trip to the State finals when one student was disqualified for using a calculator to check the answers.”

“Kate is a fine teacher, someone I fully respect; but what about the rest of his subjects? He will loose a whole year and possibly much more, and I can’t help him!”

The next morning she told John about the math club and the fun the clubs had at the United States Coast Guard Academy. He listened without saying anything.

It was the first Saturday in February when the buses rolled through the guarded front gates of the United States Coast Guard Academy and headed for Dimik Hall. Rita had

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hitched a ride with the Kelly math club. But before the competition started it was time for donuts and apple juice. Every variety of donut was on the tables. There were fat ones filled with cream or blueberry jelly and medium ones covered with cinnamon or sprinkled with coconuts, and medium fat ones with chocolate coatings on the top side, all donated by a local bakery that the Engineering Society had arranged with. Cadets in their snappy blue uniforms stood behind tables serving apple juice and opening fresh boxes of donuts. From the crowd in front of the tables you couldn’t tell whether the students were more interested in the math contest or the donuts.

By 8:30 the students were gathered in the auditorium for the pledge of allegiance and review of the rules and schedules. Then it was time for the 400 middle school students to perform.

The tests were divided in sections, each 20 to 30 minute. As soon as one section was completed, cadets would grade them. The first two sets tested the individual while the

final set was a team effort and would determine how high the school finished. There were almost as many girls as boys taking the tests and quite a few minorities, particularly Asians. When the proctors finally said put down your pencils and send the answer sheets to your right, a sigh of relief accompanied a dash down the halls to reach the pizzas and sodas.

By noon, happily fed, they were back in the auditorium st of the teachers wild.

“Sounds like your bright student has a bad case of dysgraphia“

“Is th where students with the 10 highest scores would compete

right after a talk on the ‘statistic of weather’ by the guest speaker, Dr. Thomas Crab, professor of applied mathematics. The elimination rounds would pit the students against each other two at a time. The monitor read the problem out loud and the contestant whose buzzer sounded first and gave the right answer won one of the four points needed for eliminating the opponent.

The names of the top ten were called out as cheers went up with each name. There were two from Mansfield Middle Schools where the State University was located and two from Mystic Middle School where scientist and engineers from Pfizer’s and General Dynamics lived. Mrs. Estra held her breath as the last name was read, “John O’Neil.” Now, the cheers rose from the Norwich contingents, and among the loudest were Mrs. Estra’s.

Then the competition began, one on one. The monitor read the question and the answers came quickly, sometimes before the question was completed.

“That is correct. That is correct. That is not correct.”

The questions were hard and some had a hidden trap. Soon there were only five pairs left, then three, and then one; the student from Mansfield, Tim Crab whose father had

been the guest speaker and John O'Neil from Kelly Middle School. The final set of questions began: "That is correct. That is correct. That is correct." And on it went until the last question.

The audience waited in silence as the monitor read the question: "The oldest rocks found in North America are

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gneisses from the Minnesota River valley. They have been dated at about 3.55 billion years old. If radioactive material in the rocks decays at a half-life of 1.30 billion years what percentage of the material is left. Give your answer in percents to....."

It was Tim Crab's buzzer that sounded first. "What is your answer?" "Seventeen!"

"That is not correct. I will now repeat the last part of the question, "give your answer in percents *to the nearest tenth.*" John who thought he had lost now hit his buzzer. The audience was hushed as he spoke, "seventeen point two percent."

"That is.....correct." As groans rose from the Mansfield audience, the Kelly-Norwich audience jumped to their feet. That is all but one, a middle aged, gray haired teacher. Mrs. Estra face had a smile and a tear both competing with each other.

John walked over to Tim Crab and shook his hand, then turning he smiled at the monitors and shook hands with each of the other eight contestants. The contests were over.

The monitor congratulated all the clubs and before they left and announced the top three that would be invited to the State contest. Kelly came in second!

On Monday morning during break Mrs. Estra received a call from the principal. Would you please, come to my office; I'll send a teacher to watch your class and bring John with you the superintendent wants to meet him. When Mrs. Estra entered the office Joyce was also there.

Nice pg. I2

The superintendent congratulated John and asked him about the last question. John smiled at Mrs. Estra, “ well I didn’t expect to get one on geology; but it’s my favorite subject.”

The superintendent looked at the principal, “what’s keeping this boy in your remedial classes?”

“He has dysgraphia; the teachers can’t read his writing.”

The superintendent looked first at Rita and then at the principal, “Why don’t you let John use a recorder for the written parts of the tests. Give it a try and let me know how it’s working”

As John and his teacher walked back to the classroom both were smiling and at least one was thinking about nice gneiss.

The End

SOPHIE

By Ernie Cohen Jan. 30,2012

I would have had to write a sonnet,
If her name was Harriet, Janet, or Margaret.
Instead her name is Sophie, so here is my poetry.

It wasn’t the Isle of Waikiki or on Capri,
Where I met my cute Sophie.
Now when my bones are getting old
And at times a little rickety
I’m often thankful and quite happy
I have a neighbor, named Sophie.

Responsibilities

by Ernie Cohen 8/11

God spoke to Noah on that fateful day,
A voice from above, what did it say?

Build an arc, start to prepare,
A flood will come, nothing will it spare.

Two of each kind you must seek out.
They shall be saved from each lot.

Take two of every kind.
And leave no specie behind.

This you do so as to be saved.
And others must follow the path you paved.

Those that follow

Samson and Time

By Ernie Cohen, Copyright
March 2008, Amended Aug. 2008, and Feb. 2010

Time, a non-spatial continuum,
With symbols that tell us a minimum.
Did he know time, captive and blind,
Chained to a wheel, made to grind?

.
Between the pillars he was bond,
At the base of the Temple Dagon.
Thousands above, others below,
He prayed that his strength would grow.

His hair now reached his shoulder.
The Philistine's taunts grew bolder.
We're told there is a time for all,
A time to rise, a time to fall.

He stretched his arms, felt the roof sway.
Ten thousand lords he slew that day.
Some find maturity at dawn,
For others it is slowly drawn.

A youth endowed with strength divine,
His faith had not grown with time.
Like many before by fate betrayed
Time answered him as he prayed.

Valentines Day

By Ernie Cohen c 2/8

The rains turned to sleet
And the sleet into snows
We talked of sweet things
When the bad weather goes

We'll eat red cherries and
And scoop ice cream
Like a couple of kids
On the winning team

You be the captain
We'll win every game
And I'll be the coach
Because it's no shame

That we can romance
I feel my heart pound
When I hold you close

While the only sound

Are two old timers
Making whoopee again
A graying robin and
A pretty brown wren.

Snow Fall Images

By Ernie Cohen, © Jan. 2009

How fine the snow looks,
Like threads of white hair,
Streaking paths through the air.

It covers lawns, roads, and trees,
With a whitewash fresh and clean.
Is it real or partly a dream?

For our eyes sometimes deceive,
And even make us believe,
That what we see is so.

I must go out into the snow,
And feel its numbing cold,
Only then will I really know.

For it could be clouds we see,
Like snow mountains in the sky;
Or daisies spread across a lawn,
When spring arrives and winter's gone.

The Exam

By Ernie Cohen April, 2010

Three hours have past since the start,

And cadets are working hard.

A reference book at their side,
A snack or two nearby,
For those who work and chew.

Concentrations fills the air,

Brains are stretched to break,
Each question makes them shake.

Some feet are bare, the shoes discarded.

Their toes provide the link,
For those who use a deeper think.

Straight to the brain the answers go.
There must be something special,
About that bare, left toe.

They've finished now, their pencils down,
A look of joy, or frown..
They did their best; they gave their all,
At the Coast Guard's McAllister Hall.

Spring First Walk

By Ernie Cohen © 2.11.9

When the first melts, cause pools to form,
We'll circle a half-frozen pond,
Me and Sophie Lou.

On legs still stiff from the cold,
We'll try and make it one more time,
Me and Sophie Lou.

We'll greet each day to see it through,
And look with eyes, both old and new
Me and Sophie Lou.

Survival

By Ernie Cohen © Feb. 2010

The woods lie silent, covered with a frozen layer of snow lit up by the morning sun.
Here and there patches of leaves stick through like random patterns on white bedspreads.

A solitary, gray squirrel climbs upward toward the sky; descending on a different path,
Like a staving wanderer searching the roads for a bite from some discarded food.

The squirrel's body is thin like a rope, the winter's cold has stayed and stayed.
Tomorrow will bring another storm. Will he survive, will we?

If he can struggle to keep alive, his powers limited by his size;
Then let his courage quicken our thoughts and help us sustain our lives.

Treasures in the Barn. by Ernie Cohen 8.13.11

Jim was always outside playing ball, riding his bike, or skiing on hills near his house. Even after supper his wiry five foot six inch frame could be seen jumping over stone walls or bolting from bush to bush in a desperate game of hide and seek until finally when it was too dark to see, he would lie on the grass tracking the shooting stars across the sky. It was as if school was an alien land, disconnected from his life, and reading was way down on the bottom of the list just above cleaning his room and talking to girls. He had stayed back in third grade and this year his sixth grade teacher recommended he be placed in Mrs. Estra's junior high remedial class in the fall.

But almost before summer vacation began Jim's mother contacted double

pneumonia, and her condition was further weakened by complications from the medicines she received. Jim and his younger brother and sister lived in separate foster homes. Jim's was in a rural town about thirty miles from Norwich. His foster family had no boys near his age. Three girls lived on the second floor; but they did not want to play ball or catch frogs. So, Jim spent most of June sitting alone on the curb in front of the house or in back up a large oak tree where he had placed four boards for a floor across a pair of branches. His main activity during the week was daydreaming, usually about his movie heroes. He imagined swinging through the trees with Tarzan, Boy, and Cheta chasing greedy ivory hunters back to their ships. His father took him for rides on Sundays, still his loneliness and boredom grew deeper and deeper until that day when his foster family were away shopping.

There was a red barn in back of the house near the tree where he was sitting. The front of the barn had a pair of doors large enough to drive a wide truck through. The only windows were about six feet above the ground, one on each side and about a third of the way back. On the right hand side there was a small door with a broken latch. Several times he had been told never go into the barn. Maybe it was his curiosity, or the boredom of a hot summer day that led him to open the door and go in.

Treasures in the Barn

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The only light was from the window above his head. The dust on the panes caused the light to appear as if filtered through a web. He crept slowly toward the window trying to avoid stumbling into the stacks of cardboard boxes, burlap bags, and barrels closely scattered across the floor. They appeared to be filled with discarded household items from attics, basements, and garages. He had to act quickly, for his foster family might be back any minute now, and would start looking for him. Drops of sweat ran down his neck as he decided to open one box. He chose the one stacked against the wall closest to the window where by standing on a burlap sack he would be able to see outside as well. Quickly, he stepped on top of the sack and opened the cardboard flaps revealing sheets of newspapers. Anxiously he removed the newspaper, and in the dim light from the window he could make out several stacks of half sized books. Why couldn't they have been baseball cards, he thought, as he picked up the top one? On the cover he barely was able to make out a man sitting on top of an elephant. Holding the book closer to the window he realized it was Tarzan on the elephant. Quickly, he picked up several others. Each one had a picture of Tarzan, Jim's movie hero. His heart started to race as he replaced the newspapers and closed the box for they would be returning any minute now. But, the top book he put inside his shirt.

Exiting the barn Jim needed a place to hide the book. The tree platform had two cigar boxes nailed to the floor. One contained Jim's matches and firecrackers, the other was empty. Climbing up the branches to the platform he put the book in the empty box and closed it tightly. Then, swinging down from branch to branch, he landed just as the family car was pulling into the driveway.

The next morning he climbed up the tree again. At first he read slowly, writing down words he didn't know and looking them up later in the big Webster dictionary in the living room. Each day his speed increased until he could finish a book in two days and knew Tarzan's commands to Boy, Jane, and Cheta. He even read after supper, sitting under a streetlight several streets from his home.

The summer passed quickly now. It was almost Labor Day. Jim's mother had come home and being the oldest, Jim would be home first.

Treasure in the Barn

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Mrs. Estra was also home. She had spent part of the summer teaching at a camp for handicap children. That evening as she reviewed the students assigned to her classes she noted that Jim's record though far from proficient indicated he had a keen memory and often entertained the class by retelling humorous parts from last night's "All in the Family" and "The Jackie Gleason" shows. Those were two of her favorites as well.

His mother was standing on the porch of their second floor flat when her husband brought Jim home. When she saw her son she cried with happiness and remembered her promise to God that if she recovered to take care of her family, she would honor Him and obey His commandments. Jim ran up the stairs two steps at a time and mother and son embraced and kissed there on the open porch for all to see. Jim saw that his mother's appearance had changed. Gone was her shiny black hair, replaced now by gray, almost white. But that did not matter to Jim for her smile and warmth were still there. He would sleep in his own bed tonight. His mother noted that Jim had changed. His hair was down to his shoulders and that evening instead of going out to play he picked out a book from her bookcase and sat down to read it, "The Nile; a Journey through the Heart of Africa".

School started right after Labor Day, and Mrs. Estra greeted her remedial students by passing out books with stories from novels by Stevenson, Twain, and Melville. She had purchased the books earlier with her funds and told the class they could keep them and even bring them home to share with their families. Jim was staring at a picture of a man in torn clothes building a tree house on an island. The

picture reminded him of last summer when in he was alone reading stories of Tarzan. Then, just like waking suddenly from a dream he heard his name called: “Jim, Jim,” Mrs. Estra was smiling and calling his name, “would you please join us and read page four.” Jim started to rise; and half standing and sitting, he found the page.

“When he awoke, he was lying on a beach with the waves and surf crashing at his feet. Rising he began to shout, ‘where are you, can you hear me, is anyone there?’” As he waited the only sounds he heard was a faint echo and waves crashing on the beach. He was alone!

Treasure in the Barn

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“That was well done, Jim. Did your mother help you with your reading?”

“No Mam, my mother was in the hospital. She just came home last week.”

Mrs. Estra noticed Jim’s nervousness when he answered and decided not to probe further.

During lunch she talked with her colleague about Jim’s sudden reading improvement. Her colleague, who taught language arts to the regular classes, suggested Jim read one of the poems used in her classes and see if he could handle seventh grade reading. That afternoon Mrs. Estra asked for volunteers to read poetry and since no one volunteered she again called on Jim. Handing the book to him she asked if he would please read the poem called “Genie”. Jim began to read, nervously at first, for he wasn’t sure poetry was for boys.

Genie

I am the oil genie that sleeps beneath the ocean’s floor.
I have been asleep for millions of years,
Do not disturb me.

Isn’t it enough you rob my brother,
Who sleeps beneath the plains?
You burn him in your furnaces,
And split him to make your gasolines.

But he fought back,
Though he is not the warier that I am.
He polluted your air, spilled into your rivers,
And killed your fish.

He blanked your sky,
Causing your earth to warm,
Your glaziers to melt,

And your rivers to flood.

And now you come after me,
With your floating islands,
And steel teeth to drain my blood.

Treasure in the Barn

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I will teach you a lesson,
A lesson you won't soon forget.

I will wash over your shores and stain your beaches.
I will destroy your fisheries, oyster beds, and shore birds.

And I will humble your CEO's and even your president.
My terror will reign for ninety days and ninety nights.
For I am the oil genie that sleeps beneath the ocean floor;
Do not disturb me!

When Jim finished the class was silent. Even Mrs. Estra hesitated before speaking.

"Thank you. that was very well read, Jim. Did you like the poem?"

"Yes Mam, that genie was strong. He and Tarzan would make a hell of a pair."

After the laughter died down, Mrs. Estra asked Jim what he thought the poem meant.

Jim hesitated for a while before answering; the poem reminded him of something he had read. And then it came to him:

"I read a story about a group of hunters who killed elephant so they could sell the ivory. But one time the elephants hurled them in the air and trampled them beneath their feet. The elephants took their revenge."

That afternoon before heading home Mrs. Estra stopped at the guidance office. Tim Ferro was bending over a filing cabinet filled with student reports. He was almost six and a half feet tall and when he stood up looked more like a pro basketball player than a guidance counselor.

"Am I interrupting you Tim?"

"No, this can wait." I was planning to speak to you about your remedial students. How are they doing?"

"Tim, one of my student's sixth grade record said he can only read one syllable words."

"Sounds like he may have dyslexia or a low I.Q. Have you formulated a plan to help him?"

"That's just the point; he may not need reading help; something has changed. Today he flawlessly read several paragraphs from a new book I had passed out, and later read and interpreted a poem in the Language

Arts book. He seems to have taught himself, Tim.”

“That’s quite unusual for a youngster, unless he happened to be alone all summer with a supply of adventure stories and a good dictionary.”

Tim, right now I’m not as interested in how he learned as how we can help him transfer to a regular class.

“That’s not going to be so easy, Rita. Classes are just about in place.”

“I need to meet with the front office on Friday.”

“Friday? Three days may not be enough time to come up with a plan.”

“Please, try. It’s important that the transfer occur while classes are just starting. I’ll check with you tomorrow.”

Tim took two deep breaths as Mrs. Estra left, and then wrote on his pad “I don’t believe that women is for real! Start developing a plan!”

During the following day she called on Jim to read several times. Each time he hardly missed a word. She was convinced he could handle the regular classes; now it all depended on Tim’s plan..

On Wednesday afternoon she was once again at the guidance counselor’s door.

“ I thought you might have forgotten,” Tim said with a half smile.

“No such luck, Tim. Have you thought of a plan?”

“Sit down and let me explain. Each school year we test certain students, ones new to our system to determine their right place.”

Rita was listening intently and did not interrupt.

“I’m planning to have Jim tested tomorrow along with several newcomers, and if he shows improvement I’ll help you with the transfer.”

Rita stood up to leave, but Tim had one more thing to say, “You are aware that our assistant principal will take a lot to convince; Joyce doesn’t believe in change.”

Mrs. Estra knew what Tim meant about Joyce, a retired marine who ran her office like a military outpost. She could be difficult and delay or even scuttle Jim’s transfer. Now she needed a plan. That afternoon instead of going home she called her husband and left a message. “ Hello dear. I’ll be late; have to go to New London on a school matter. If you get hungry there’s tuna fish salad in the fridge; made it this morning.”

Mrs. Estra drove past Connecticut College on her way to New London. She was the first part time commuter to graduate from there. Her thoughts went back to the intellectual and stimulating courses she took for her English major; and then she smiled wondering

how they relate to her present problem of dealing with a tough ex- marine. Mrs. Estra parked her compact car between two vans on State Street and entered the building across the street. In the two front windows there were pictures of ships, airplanes, and men and women in uniform. The sign above the door read, “ United States Marine Recruiting Station.” The marine behind the desk was shuffling a stack of olive green papers that looked like they could have been fresh directive from the Pentagon. His blue-braided cap and white gloves were on a table near the desk. Mrs. Estra waited until he looked up.

“Good after noon, I’m sorry, but we already filled our monthly quota for female volunteers.”

Mrs. Estra did not smile instead she gave the marine the same look she wore when one of her students started to act up..

“Young man I didn’t drive through late afternoon traffic after enduring five classes of boisterous adolescents, to listen to your inept attempt at humor.” This time the smile on the marines face was replaced by a look of sudden attentiveness. “I came here to ask if the marines test new recruits when their prior records are below standards.”

The marine relaxed a bit, she wasn’t going to ask to have her son discharged. “Yes, we will test them again, especially young men, who hadn’t taken school seriously.”

“And do you sometimes see an improvement that enables them to meet the standards?”

“Yes, we often do, particularly among those who have begun to read books and newspapers on their own.”

Mrs. Estra smiled, and thanked the sergeant for the information.

“May I ask why you wanted to know this?”

“It has to do with being prepared in case I’m under attack by a former marine. May I have your name in case we have to contact you?”

“Certainly, Mam; sergeant Aaron Greenberg; but I won’t be working, the week after next when the Jewish Holidays begin.”

As Mrs. Estra was leaving she called back, “Neither will I, sergeant, neither will I.”

It was Thursday afternoon when Mrs. Estra again appeared at Tim’s office.

Treasure in the Barn

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Jim had been asked to leave class that morning to take a test at the guidance office.

Afterwards he said nothing about it, although it seemed to him most of the questions in the reading section were not that hard. Tim was looking over some papers when Rita asked, “Well, Tim is the flag up or down?”

Instead of answering he handed her a sheet of paper with two sets of numbers on it, 5th grade 114, 7th grade 139. Tim had increased his I.Q. by twenty-five points putting him in the top, ten percentile.

“Rita, I’ll be there tomorrow when you meet with the brass.”

“ Nice going Tim, and thanks. See you tomorrow.”

That night Rita slept peacefully for the first time in three nights, when Friday's meeting came with the principal and Joyce, Tim and Rita carried the day. But, there was one more thing she needed to do. That night she spoke with Jim's parents. She explained about his progress in reading and his improved test score. Then she said in both hers and the guidance councilor's judgment Jim should be entered in the regular 7th grade classes where he will get the challenging work to help him grow. If you do not object the transfer will occur early next week. Both his parents were pleased with the transfer and Jim's father said he would take Jim to the Red Sox Indian play off game in Boston as Jim's favorite team was the Cleveland Indians. Jim's mother told Mrs. Estra that this was the second good news she received today. The social worker and doctor agreed that it was time to bring Jim's younger brother, Franklin, home as soon as Sunday. Mrs. Estra said she was glad to be part of the good news. Also, there was one thing that still puzzled her, "How did Jim improve his reading over the summer?"

Jim's mother hesitated and then made Mrs. Estra promise to keep it a secret. She told Mrs. Estra about the barn, finding the stack of Tarzan books there, and how Jim spent all his free time reading adventures of his movie hero.

Mrs. Estra smiled why of course, there's nothing better than a good adventure story to make a boy want to read. When are they going to learn that "padulum" just won't do?

The End

The Acrobats

By Ernie Cohen © Jan. 2010

What a show nature gave,
This grayish winter's day.

Their greatest acrobats,
In joyous spontaneity.

First there were two,
Then four, then six,

Dressed in fur-skin tights,
Slim and sleek, swinging up,
Then down, jumping, twisting.
Each, more daring than the last.

Until I cried, and cheered.
Thank you, for such a show,
This snowy, New Year's day.

I shall spread peanuts on the lawn.

The Words

A Short Story

Part III

by

Reba Estra

Literature 149

August 9, 1973

**©Ernie Cohen
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“You got no right!”

She stood in the doorway rigid from the tips of her platformed clogs to the straggling curls on her cheeks. Her jeans were skin tight on her thin legs. A plaid shirt fell open to reveal a skimpy halter worn in defiance of the school dress code. Blue halos above her eyes seemed to intensify the glare. Colleen had arrived.

“Who says so?” I threw back from behind the desk.

“You got no right to make me stay here now and miss the dance!” came her shriek. There was silence from the desk so Colleen continued. “My father’s gonna get you for this. He’s gonna call.”

“Good idea.” I scribbled briefly and held out a slip of paper. “Here’s my phone number. I’ll be home after seven.”

“Not you, he’s gonna talk to the Principal!”

“That’s an even better idea. I’ll write a brief report of what happened for the Principal. And since you’re here, you can check it to be sure it’s right.”

Colleen closed her mouth and moved a bit into the room. “You teacher’s are all alike, you lie, all the time you lie.”

“This time you can be witness to what’s being said about you. “I’ll even leave room for you to tell your side.

“I didn’t do nothing. This whole thing’s a fake. You lie, all the time you lie.”

“Go ahead, throw away a chance to catch a teacher in the act. In writing, too.”

Colleen stepped into the room. She collapsed herself into a seat, legs thrown wide, and halter fully revealed.

“Go ahead, write your lies.” She took out a bottle of metallic blue polish and began delicately to touch up imaginary chips on her fingernails. She glared at me while waiting to be told to put it away.

I ignored her. Quickly I grabbed a piece of composition paper and with the purple felt-tip I had been using to correct papers I wrote the report. The purple pen was sure to cause comments if the report ever actually reached the office. Then I handed it to her to read.

“Lies, all lies” she muttered as she picked up the paper.

Today Colleen came to class five minutes late. Her lateness was for an excusable reason, but her behavior that followed cannot be excused.

When she entered, everyone was quietly busy with the day's assignment. She walked from desk to desk, greeting classmates she had not seen for the last ten minutes. She slapped playfully at Robert when he had no gum to give her. She pushed Joey's books onto the floor when he couldn't find a pencil to lend her. Then she draped herself around David to discuss whose turn it was to find the after school cigarettes.

All of this was ignored; my only action was to urge Colleen to get to her desk.

Then Colleen spotted Mary. Two sharp sentences sent Mary in hysterics running from the room. This upset class order so; little additional work could be done for the rest of the period.

For these reasons Colleen was assigned detention today. She was asked to serve it during time set aside for the school dance because transportation problems make any other arrangement impossible.

Colleen has been asked to read this report and make any corrections necessary.

"You sure took long enough. Must have told a whole bunch of lies," was her comment as she grabbed the sheet. She read it, laughing at first, then "You lie!" she screamed.

"Where?"

"It wasn't gum. Robert had Life Savers."

Colleen read the report again and asked one question, "What's 'hysterics?'"

I told her. I was waiting for more explosions.

“That Mary, she’s dumb. I didn’t do nothing to her.”

“Mary didn’t just begin to cry and run out because you walked past her desk.”

“You don’t understand. She looked so awful, I just told her so. Besides, saying something’s not like doing something,” Colleen brooded for a minute and then grew indignant again. “You got no right to keep me here!”

“You’ve got no right to make Mary so unhappy.”

“She’s stupid. Anyway, no one has to listen to anyone. I was just fooling.”

“It’s not funny when you tell someone she looks ugly and everyone’s laughing at how ugly she’s dressed.”

“I told you she’s dumb. She should’ve known how silly she looked. I only told her the truth.”

“You knew Mary had made the dress herself and was so happy about it. Was that what you couldn’t stand?”

The mascara filled tears fell faster. Colleen put down her head and stumbled into a seat. In a quiet voice she answered, “It’s her fault. She was talking to David.”

I handed the box of tissues across the desk. “You’re feeling pretty miserable. Have you thought about how Mary’s feeling now?”

The wet eyes looked up. “She’s probably hiding near the bleachers.” The thought almost brought a smile.

Suddenly Colleen headed for the door. “I’m going to that dance.” I’m gonna go

out that door and you can't stop me."

"Go ahead. You'd better see David today, because you won't sit near him in my class again, ever."

She hesitated, playing with the doorknob. "All you teacher's lie." The words had an almost automatic sound.

"You saw all the lies in my report you tore up."

"Slowly she turned back into the room. "But it was only a couple of words. You've got no right."

"When a couple of words cause such unhappiness, I've got every right."

"Just because your class got messed up you got me in trouble!"

"No, I care about the class, but I'm more concerned about you and Mary. She didn't have to be unhappy today, and you and I didn't have to miss the dance. You know, I like those dances too."

"All you teachers ever do is nag about gum and keeping sneakers on and not running and shooting rubber bands."

"Because all you kids do is try to chew gum and go barefoot and raise hell."

We both laughed. Colleen sat down and waited.

"Want to help correct some papers to kill the time?"

She nodded. "Can I use the purple pen?"

I handed her the pen and the answer sheet. "Study it for a minute. I'll go get us some Cokes."

“Maybe I won’t be here when you get back,” she called as I reached the door.

“Lies,” I grinned, “all lies.”

The Flying Horse

By Ernie Cohen © Feb. 2011

“Good morning, Senator.

Where have you been, George, I’ve been dialing your cell phone for the past two hours.

I had to dump it at the Pentagon gate. I was there all morning. They were voting on the Flying Horse contract.

Did we win, George?

Where are you, Senator?

At Judy’s; we’re having breakfast.

You better ask her to leave; it’s still confidential.

George, what was the dam vote?

We lost, Senator; the Europeans won.

Those ‘son of a bitches; those pinky mother----.

Take it easy, Senator; they’ll be other contracts down the road.

George, we’ve been working on this for eight years; it’s now worth 40 billion. I’m not letting a bunch of red coats steal America jobs!

But, what can we do, Senator? They’ll announce it after the market closes today.

We'll hit them with loss of American jobs. I'll call Governor Rell; Pratt stands to loose thousands of machinist jobs. Isn't Connecticut's Senator chairman of the Arms Services Committee?

It's too late, Senator; they're announcing that the plane will be assembled in Mobile Alabama.

Those, bastards they're playing our game.

O'K. we still have an ace to play.

What is it, Senator?

Patriotism!

But the Europeans were low bidders.

Patriotism trumps savings.

Not according to that lady columnist on the Times.

That bitch! Her mother must have gave it to half the Royal Air Force.

What else can we do, Senator?

We've got 36 states where Boeing's contracts will be going, and I've got four more lined up for the wheels, brakes, radar, and the defrosters.

Senator, we could kill the whole deal. Those congressmen from the Green Party want to scrap it and build high-speed rail.

Those pink-greenies. We're going to get them. Sunday's papers will carry stories about their pot smoking, past and present.

Senator, What if some reporter asks what's their purpose?

They're too dumb to ask that. But, if a smart-ass reporter does, say it's more than just jobs. It's about humanitarian aid and the capability of projecting American power in every part of the world. Goodbye George, and **God bless America.**

The Peacock in an Oak Tree #3

By Ernie Cohen © April 2011

The two junior high school language arts teachers were not only colleagues they were very close friends. Both overcame major obstacles in order to achieve their professional goals. Mrs. Estra was twelve years older than her colleague when she started college. She was the first "walk on" student at a prestigious women's college in southeastern Connecticut. It took her six years and the loan of a gown from the dean to graduate. Her colleague started at the same college directly after high school. Her eyesight had been seriously limited as a child, and she would lose even that during her teaching career.

During former years the two language arts teachers had adjoining classrooms and often discussed plans for their classes and the stories they would use. But this year Mrs. Estra's class would meet in a hallway equipped with desks, since there were no vacant classrooms. As she was preparing lesson plans for the first week of school, Mrs. Estra was conscious of several problems. One, she would have to teach listening skills so that her instructions could be followed. Two, she would have to teach thinking skills, pausing to consider instead of jumping to conclusions. But, above all she would have to change the stigma that this was a 'dumb' class and not as worthy as the others. True, some misspelled words, wrote illegibly, and had trouble with pronunciations; but they often did well in art and arithmetic, and even excelled in tasks that required manual dexterity such as building model houses and making fashion clothes. So she was looking forward to the start of the school year and the challenges ahead, for she understood the lasting damage that stigmas cause and their self-fulfilling prophecies.

Across from the teachers lounge under a tall oak tree was her favorite parking space. As she was locking her car that first morning of school she heard something. It sounded like the wind swaying the branches, only there was no wind. She stopped to look, her eyes stepping up the tree stopped at the top branch. She had seen turkeys land in trees near her home and a red tail hawk had a nest there. But this bird looked different. It had purple and green feathers underneath and what appeared to be feathers rising from its back. Could it be a peacock like the ones at the Mohegan Park Zoo? The Zoo was less than half a mile away and the peacocks were the main attraction in the bird section. She

recalled how beautiful the males' trains were when they strutted across the pen to the delight of the spectators. But this one was free except its leg appeared caught on a branch with a piece of kite string.

She had to hurry now to welcome her remedial students. As she ran past the teachers' lounge she announced just as the bells were ringing: "There's a peacock above my car." "Rita, what have you been drinking?" they answered. "No, really, there is." But, they were already on their way to classes.

The morning went quickly for the students wanted to make a good impression on their first day. She managed to send a note down to the principal before reading Mark Twain's classic story about a jumping frog. As she read, her thoughts kept retuning to the bird. Suddenly it came together. Maybe it was the story of the jumping frog or the laughter, earlier of her colleagues that sparked it. For the first time today a smile appeared beneath her wavy, gray hair.

As the last morning class entered she announced, "class, I have a surprise for you. We will be going to see the peacock. But first turn on your computers, and click encyclopedia. Now search for the word "peacock." You are to write a description of the male, and draw its picture in your note books." The class could hardly believe their luck and finished the assignment just as the bells were ringing. Quickly they lined up at the door as Mrs. Estra led them into the parking lot. "Where's the bus, Mrs. Estra? Will we have sandwiches for lunch?"

Slowly she addressed the class: "This will be a lesson in listening and thinking before jumping to conclusions."

"But you promised we could see the peacocks at the zoo"

"No, that's not what I said. I said. I would show you the peacock. I never mentioned the word 'zoo' and I used the singular form of the noun peacock."

A silence descended over the class; no longer was the glow of anticipation painted across their faces; rather there was now a glow of budding anger, anger at being wrong and anger at being wronged. "That's not fair, we want to see a real peacock not a picture."

Slowly Mrs. Estra turned and slowly walked across the parking lot, letting their anger and their mistrust build. Turning, she motioned for them to follow, and stopping just beneath the great oak she addressed the class again.

"I did not lie to you or mislead you, you heard what you wanted to hear not what was said. Now, let's start again. Please, look at the tree above you; examine each branch as you look higher and higher."

All the heads tilted skyward, still doubting their new teacher.

"Look one shouted, it's a turkey."

"Wait a minute it's got a purplish green neck with a purplish belly."

“There are long feathers along its back.”

“It’s a peacock alright, male turkeys have red bibs.”

Mrs. Estra was listening. She felt, a quiet sense of joy like when as the first ‘walk on’ student at a prestigious women’s college her poems received encouraging comment in literature class. For today she had taught the first lesson on listening and thinking. And she had made good on her promise to the class. But what about those skeptical teachers who laughed at her this morning? It was now time to get even!

“Alright class, you can go to lunch, and be sure and tell your friends about the peacock. Would you two boys also go to the front office and tell the principal or his assistant what you saw. Thank you.”

That afternoon the word peacock spread like feathers throughout Kelly Junior High School. Soon the principal was at her door. “I’ve seen it, Mrs. Estra. Two of your students pointed it out. I’ve called the fire department as well as the zoo. They’re on their way. Will those two students show them where it is?”

“Yes Tony, we’ll take care of it”

But, that was not the end of it. The next morning the lead story in the Local Section of the Norwich Bulletin read:

“Kelly students find the zoo’s missing peacock. The principal praised Mrs. Estra’s class for their alertness and keen interest in nature. He also thanked her students for showing the zookeeper, Mr. Johnson, and the firemen the location of the peacock. The large bird was freed from the kite string around its leg by the zookeeper who was lifted 30 feet in the Central City’s new hook and ladder. As a reward the principal gave Mrs. Estra’s class tomorrow afternoon off for a trip to the zoo and with the promise of sandwiches and ice cream for lunch.

That next morning when Mrs. Estra entered the teacher’s lounge there was a basket of assorted donuts and fresh coffee, waiting. While the teachers ate and exchanged peacock stories they let Mrs. Estra know if she needed assistance with her class, all she had to do was ask. As Mrs. Estra walked toward her homeroom she thought ‘this is going to be a pretty good year thanks to the plans she had prepared for the week.’ And then she laughed.

Nature’s Lesson

© Ernie Cohen, Dec. 2010

Their nuts had long been buried,

Their nests carefully made.
Their chores and tasks completed,
And now the time for play.

Trees had dropped their leaves,
Exposing a lattice of branches,
And revealing the athletes of winter,
In all their daring feats.

They chased a helix up a tree,
Then type walked to the branches end,
And with their weights to bend them down,
Vaulted from tree to tree.

Can we not learn from them,
To prepare before the storm,
Fill the pantry, nail the shingles,
Before we start to play.

Two squirrels chased a spiral round a tree,
Then type walked to the branch's ends
And using their weight to bend them
Vaulted from tree to tree.

For winter had dropped their leaves,
Exposing a lattice of branches
And revealing the athletes of winter
To entertain at our window.

The Skeptic

By Ernie Cohen Copy write July. 2007

**I don't believe in Global Warming.
I'm not so easy to sway.
Even when the icebergs slowly melt away.**

**And to blame the forest fires
On a severely lasting drought,
Makes my blood boil and raises up my doubt.**

**They had a flood in Texas,
It rained for seven days.
Forget Global Warming, just blame it's on the gays.**

**So what if summer's hotter,
And it's sweltering in July
It's still a lot of hooey and a big fat liberal lie.**

**So if things get a little rough
I'll move to Alaska's shores.
And spend my leisure hours frolicking outdoors.**

The Troops

By Ernie Cohen © Feb. 2011

They move silently from spot to spot,
Stopping only to dig the snow.

January's still covers the ground.
And February's has deepened it.

Now, snow is covering their tracks.
Their white tails wave like flags,
But not in surrender!

For they mean to survive,

To greet the coming Spring.
And I will share their joy.

Two Bearded Men

By Ernie Cohen, copyright, Nov. 2008

A bearded Jew boarded a plane in N. Y. headed for Europe. The only vacant seat was next to a bearded Arab reading a copy of the Koran. The Jew sat down and after a while without turning his head said “shalom.” The Arab without turning his head replied, “shalom.” Neither said another word until somewhere over the Atlantic as the plane bounced wildly in the midst of turbulent and repeated updrafts the Jew spoke first, “Would you mind if I held onto your arm?” The Arab who had been praying ardently looked up and said “I was just going to ask you.” As darkness descended and as thunder and lightning now joined with the turbulence the two men sat quietly, holding hands. In the morning as they were departing from the plane the Arab spoke first, “shalom.” The Jew replied “shalom.”

Moral of the story “It is better to hold hands with your enemy than to piss in your pants.”

Valentine Day

By Ernie Cohen Copy-right Feb. '08

*Winter sun's are weak
And barely warm your face
While winter winds are cold
And force your heart to race.
Winter makes you patient
And hardens the sleeping seed
That lays in the earth,
Where it waits to breed.
We also wait
As rains turn to snows.*

And talk of sweet things

*When the bad weather goes.
.We'll eat red cherries,*

*And scoop up ice cream,
Like a couple of kids,
On a winning team.
You'll be the captain,
We'll win every game.
I'll be the coach
And we'll feel no shame.
For we still can romance,
And feel our hearts pound.
When I hold you close,
And the only sound
Is two old timers
Making whoopee again,
A graying robin and
A pretty brown wren.*

This poem is dedicated to my wife, Rita, in her memory this Memorial Day Weekend

Iris by Ernie Cohen, © May, 2010

A row of iris greets the early day,
reflecting a pale soft lavender,
that could only have come from God..

Their gracefull blossoms hang
like a women's tresses
In loops of modest beauty.

An early morning sunbeam, suddenly,
and almost magically turns them into
tinted bulbs of shimmering light.

The sun is their friend,
his beams enhance their beauty,
turning their quiet modesty into glowing splendors.

He brings forth their dual personality,
like those females who in their colorful dresses,
will soon be passing by,
and will stop to admire one of their own.

This Town is Your Town This Town is My Town
This Town is your Town; this Town is my Town
From Shetucket's waters to the rising hillsides,
From the parkland forests to the Chelsea Harbor
This town was made for you and me.

I've roamed I've rambled; I've followed my footsteps
Toward the majestic oak trees that line the roadsides.
And all around me a voice was sounding
This Town was made for you and me.

The sun was shining as I was strolling,
The lilies waving, their petals opening,
The fog was lifting a voice came chanting,
This Town was made for you and me.

On the streets of the City in the shadows of the steeples,
Near the relief office I see our people,
And some are grumblin' and some are wonderin'
If this Town was made for you and me.

From the Masonic Temple that ain't there no more,
To the parking garage that blocks our waterfront,
To the Transportation Center, a voice keeps asking
Is this Town made for you and me?

From the water falls of the Yantic River
Where the hydro plant does not exist.
Above the tumbling waters a voice was saying.
Does this Town belong to you and me?

The cars are rolling along crash alley
Where once our neighbors built their homes.
I heard a voice above the traffic,
Does this town belong to you and me.

In the streets of the City in the shadows of the steeples,
Near the relief offices- I see our people
And some are grumblin' and some are wonderin'
If this Town was made for you and me.

12/18/08

I received an E- Mail from a friend which purported to connect almost all of today's problems with our lack of religion. Coincidentally, it hit a cord on what I've been thinking and reading about lately. I've copied my reply through four questions.

- where does evil come from.
 - why are there religious wars
 - what is the purpose of religion
 - should we love the evil inside .
1. The Old Testament says the tree of knowledge contained good and evil. And so our quest for knowledge included knowing what is evil. However knowing what is evil and doing evil are two different things.
 2. Religious wars are made against the other "inferior" religion usually for material gains and often to find an escape goat for our own inadequacies.
 3. The purpose of religion is to give comfort to the distressed and disadvantaged. It can elevate us to a higher moral ground and often intrigues us with its profundity.
 4. We should know our evil and bring it into our consciousness. It is not wise to repress or suppress our evil thoughts and deeds. By bringing them into our full conscious mind we can resist them. This often raises us up and keeps us "alive". Therefore, if to know a person is to love a person, by knowing our evil within we can love it as well.

Ernie

The Duffer's Toast

By Ernie Cohen, © Nov. 2009

My hopes ran high,
All week I trained,
On grip, and stance, and lie.

Determined,
To improve my play:

Reread Hogan and ate proteins
At least three times a day.

Finally.
When the time arrived
My drive hooked round a tree.
The starter's lucky to have survived

By the ninth I wasn't sure
My clubs were straight or bent
So I prayed, please, send a cure.

Instead, things went from bad to worse
And took all of my strength and will
Not to break those clubs and curse..

Slowly, I put my clubs away
And at the bar I had to pay.
Each glass was raised, I heard them say:
"Tomorrow, is another day".

Twentieth Anniversary Rhyme

By Ernie Cohen 10/2/11
To Wayne and Cheryl on their 20th Wedding Anniversary

As you lay dozing in our chairs,
Chores all done and no more cares.
A vision came through the pane,
Dressed in velvet with a golden chain.

Across its back it wore a quiver,
With three arrows, tipped in silver.
In its hand a bow of ivory,
And wore a cap to one side wily.

And as it flew across the room,
It sang and danced to this tune:
"Would you sleep, while others play?
I'll fill your heart with love today.

Have you forgotten that summer night?
When moon beans were the only light,
You held her close and she held tight.

I've rode upon a silvery moon,
To join you to my tribe.
So he will always be your groom,
And she your precious bride.

Two Different Times

By Ernie Cohen c June '07

**The Friendship Train left L. A. sixty years ago.
Stopping only to take on food,
Its mission took it through
Tulsa, De Moines, and Kalamazoo.
While a hungry Europe was standing by
Americans had heard their cry.**

*Caskets arrive each solemn day
Bringing them back from far away,
Back to a place where they can stay
To rest from war and quietly lay.
While their families sit at the wake
With saddened hearts that often break.*

*At East coast docks the boxcars arrived
Filled with food so Europe would survive.*

**Flags were raised and banners wave
As the ship, now loaded set forth to save.**

***The processions move along Main Street
Led by comrades in perfect beat.
Heroes and soldiers with bodies once sound
Their caskets are lowered in the ground.***

**Remember the train and the soldiers we knew.
Both meant America, so faithful and true.
A different time, a different end,
Let us pray that we see sunlight again.**

Yitzhak and Yasser

By Ernie Cohen, © Jan. 2009

Two brave men from countries torn,
Shook hands on the Whitehouse lawn.
By each, a solemn oath was sworn,
To bring light to hopes forlorn.

There were no signs or buoys for guides,
Across seething seas of hate.
Each took an oar to push his side,
Each became the others mate.

Two brave men took up the challenge,
Even though the odds were long.
Stood for peace amid curse and taunt
Faced the anger from their throng.

United in their quest for peace
Went home where they would die.
Standing firm in a violent land
They did not fail to try.

Yitzhak and Yasser cont.

Gave their lives in a land gone blind,
That would not hear or see,
Where fences rose creating hates
And fearful men control the gates

If they can see and hear the cries,
Of children in the street,
Crying from their broken hearts
To parents at their feet

If they can see the soldiers guns,
The rockets rising up,
Shout out from heavens lofty heights,
Or from hells burning fiery lights.

And tell the world it must look here.
Where God spoke to children dear.
Where temples rose and angels sang,
To heal hearts and quell the pang.

Tell the world its time to change,

Motionless stand the trees,
Their branches lifeless and waiting.
The ground, compacted and solid, lies waiting..
And water trapped in ice is frozen and waiting.

Only the birds move,
Hopping like ping pong balls
Crossing back and forth.
While we wait for the blizzard that's coming.

It came last night while we were sleeping,
And cast a white blanket over the ground.
A squirrels travel sideways above the snow,
A birds flits from branch to branch,
Searching their memories for snow..

My boots are waiting by the door,
My shovel rests near by.
But, I will wait and gather a plan,
For I remember snow.

First cut a path through the snow,
With a wall above my knees.
Hard going at first though the snow is light,
Till the body adjusts to work.

The path grows wide, the walls get higher.
A neighbor lends a hand
Suddenly the road opens,
As the last shovel is thrown aside,

Uncover the car and back it up.
Elation as the wheels bite in.
It's done; the blizzard is beaten.
I'll feed the birds before its dark,
And see my gal tonite.

Watching Spring Arrive

By Ernie Cohen © 4-8

Grey tree trunks, twisted branches,
Fill the forest canopy.
Below a mat of dab, brown leaves,
Decay back to earth.

Slowly changes are occurring
Delicate yellow blossoms
Gild the forsythia branches
And sparkle in the sunlight.

Brown grass at the forest edge,
Mix with patches of green.
While a round ruddy robin,
Pulls his food from the ground.

Here and there along the edges,
Vernal pools appear.
Where tiny fairy shrimp move,
Slim and feathery among the leaves.

And from the half sunken logs
In the leafy clogged waters,
Tree frogs sing to their mates

It's spring again, winters giving way,
Be patient and watch,
The signs are all about us.

Who

By Ernie Cohen © July '09

Who stopped the rains?
Who lowered the waters?
And set the ark on dry land?
Who promised Noah 'never again'?
And gave us choices to make?

Who heats the lands?
And increases the winds,
That feed the fires,
That destroys the trees?

Who melts the icebergs,
And shrinks the glaciers
That raise the waters again?

Are these the choices we made?

Windows

By Ernie Cohen © Jan. 2009

Blue stars, white planets sparkle
On a pane of frozen ice,
Like fairy queen's diadems,
Stretched across my window.
Nature creates beauty
Out of moisture on a glass.

While beyond the window
A bird, a deer, a man,
Shiver in sub-zero cold,
While nature goes its way
And hardly give a damn.

WISDOM

By Ernie Cohen (C) 12/7

To think you know why things are so,

When reason supports your eyes.

How is it then some men see it other wise.

*The scientist and the humanist
Are trained in different ways,
While each appears in the way a child plays.*

*It's growing up that clouds our soul,
And places limits round our mind.
Little boxes make us smart, but oh so blind.*