

2010-20 Five Snapshot Poems

(Incidents that captured my interest often with message, which I have tried to describe in short poems.)

The Terrier Magnets

Harry Strachan, October 3, 2011

As a child I was given
Two Terrier magnets,
One black and one white.
Held a certain way they avoided each other,
Reversed they clasped each other tightly.

Sandy in tugboat mode
Heads straight toward me.
She's clear about what she wants.
Not agreeing, I dodge her silently.
Angrier, she makes a second charge.

I decide to meet her charge head-on,
Fearful the crash will destroy much.
I rev up my engines unflinchingly
Eyes lock, the tugs hit each other.
Surprise, no destruction, just a terrier's clasp.

Bus Drivers

Harry Strachan, Meditation Poem, February 19, 2012

Competitive blue buses
Race to the stop.
The winner gets the passengers,
The loser leapfrogs to the next.

Opposite comes a twin blue bus
It blinks in friendly fashion
Both competitors respond in kind.
You can feel the warmth between.

What exactly is the message?
Surely not, "Speed trap ahead."
Among the options, probably,
"I see you, travel safely!"

Your blink tells me you see me
As someone of worth, an equal,
Even if we play different roles,
Even if we compete.

My resolution through the day:
Blink at all a smile that says,
"I see you fellow traveler,
Be safe on your journey."

Ben in the Waves

Harry Strachan, July 19, 2015, Rev'd August 13, 2017

Big waves break in the calm sea,
Roll in, break again, vigorously
Push a ribbon of foam up the beach.

Ben, at three, having experienced
The panic of being rolled
In a breaking wave,

Cannot be persuaded
To cross the ribbon of foam
To join his older brothers in deeper water.

His grandfather joins him
Fleeing the incoming foam
And then advancing as it recedes.

He gives the game words singing
“I’m not afraid” while advancing
“Oops! I am afraid” racing back.

Ben, surprised, gleefully marches alongside
Down: “I’m not afraid...”
Back up: “Oops! I’m afraid.”

Some waves race up with strength
Others, meeting the backwash,
Lose their strength.

Grandfather adapts the game
“I’m not afraid... Oops...No..
You’re weak, letting water cover his ankles.

But when a strong wave comes in
It’s still “Oops! Now I’m afraid!”
And a race to avoid the water.

Ben catches on quickly.
“You’re weak I’m not afraid”
And the water covers his shins.

Ben, now sensing he knows
Weak from strong, soon decides
To join his brothers in deeper water.

Three Crazies at Lunch

Harry Strachan, August 8, 2015, Revised August 13, 2017

Three childhood friends raised in the same strict
Faith sit together at lunch.
In the 1960s, like their peers, each left home
Traveling far and wide before returning to retire.

Now the architect studies Biblical prophecy
Amazed at its precision: wars, God's punishments.
The predictions say in September Israel will bomb Iran,
The stock market will collapse, and Obama will lead a coup de etat.

The psychologist, after a spell as an atheist,
Has discovered that the universe is love,
Don't let the bad stories of your mind
Past, present or future, obscure reality's true nature.

The businessman thinks he's living in the world
Described by the Economist: a world of nation states,
Global trade, Einstein's Relativity, Darwin's Evolution.
Yes, we've got big problems; they are of our own making.

Laughingly he says "We're all crazies!
For the architect, it's all in the Bible.
For the psychologist it's all in the Mind.
For me it's all science, politics and economics."

Each well along on the road to death,
Fearing for the fate of grandchildren and planet,
Is consoled with a myth that assures him
This perilous Ship will somehow make it through.

The Man in the Blue Seersucker and Jaunty Hat

Harry Strachan July 24, 2017 Escazu

The man in the blue seersucker suit
With jaunty straw hat and satchel
Walking down the road to the bus stop
Lifts his finger and gives me a “Buen Dia!”
So rare a suit, a hat and satchel in our warm climate
I begin to imagine.

Is he a salesman on his way to work,
Whose flair gets him to at least a pitch?

Is he a shopkeeper in the new mall
At the bottom of the hill?

Is he a bus-riding missionary
Intent on demonstrating the abundant life?

He notices across the road
An old man in sneakers, baseball cap,
Black shorts and white golf shirt
Swinging his arms in an effort to hide his limp,
Who returns his “Buenos Dias” with no gringo accent.
Perhaps he also wonders.

Am I one of those eccentric old men
Come to Costa Rica, to escape a past gone wrong?

Am I a doddering pensionado on his morning constitutional
Whose wife worries he’ll forget the way back home?

Or am I a retired missionary, tired in my faith,
But with nowhere else to go?

At home I think, “Stereotypes have some element of truth
But inevitably are mainly false,
Hiding no doubt the much richer real story of
The man in the blue seersucker with jaunty hat, and
The old man with baseball cap and limp,
Who exchanged “Buenos Dias” this morning at 6:30.

