

# *Terradise*



## Poems of Ray Romine

Compiled by Trella H. Romine

Illustrated by Patti Sharpe

April 2006

Terradise – Poems of Ray Romine  
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## *Ray Romine*

*1912-1954*

Ray was known as the “Postman Poet” since most of his poems were written as he carried the U. S. Postal route in the Vernon Heights area in Marion, Ohio. He often said that his job required little concentration, so he kept himself sane by jotting down his verses in a small notebook. Each evening, upon returning home, he transcribed his production for the day, noting the date followed by a small a, b, c, d or e if more than one verse was written that day.

Through the years he sent batches of ten or more verses with a return envelope to magazines and newspapers keeping about 100 poems in the mail all the time. This resulted in more than 300 of his poems being published in the 1940’s and early 1950s in such publications as the Saturday Evening Post, Colliers, Christian Science Monitor, Farm Journal, The American Boy, The Wall Street Journal, Humpty Dumpty Magazine for Little Children, and the New York Times.

This booklet, “Terradise.” is but a small selection from the over 3,000 poems he wrote and is the first in a series of publications that will give a new audience the pleasure of sharing Ray’s thoughts on many subjects.

But remember--he often said that he could write from opposite points of view.



## *On the Death of a Genius*

*Engrossed in what he thought or saw  
That others never think or see,  
He still found the time he needed for  
Inspiring you and me.*

*The shock is doubly harrowing  
For all his friends to find  
An intellect like his can pass  
Like any other mind.*

*This poem was written about a friend seven years before the death of Ray Romine on August 24, 1954 at age 44. Ray might well have been written it about himself.*





## *Happy Ending*

*Remember that spot by the garden seat,  
And the flagstone path that led our feet  
There, while the flowers, scented musk,  
Whitely smiled in the gathered dusk?*

*Recall how we wondered what they played  
When the crickets filed their serenade?*

*But most vivid of all to me of them  
Is my sweetest impression of you, for when  
Your sweetheart made an unholy mess  
Of his nervous proposal, you answered "Yes!"*



## *Terradise*

*Some folks, I think, expect a lot  
From one small eighteen acre plot,  
Like woods, a river, and a hill,  
And orchids on a greenhouse sill;  
And wilder flowers on the banks;  
A thrush's melody over it all;  
And friends who come, and yes, the riot  
Of kiddies, should it get TOO quiet!*

*But best of all, tranquility  
For her, and her ideals,--and me;  
Each strengthened, all our lives repaired;  
Love for both, and a burden shared.*



## *Lines for Someone Very Special*

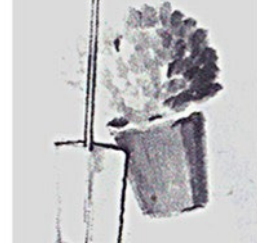
*I cannot pray somehow for gain,  
Nor power over fellow-man;  
I, rather, thank Him for this world  
And for my being part of plan.*

*Enjoyment of our verdant earth  
Will never give me time to cry.  
There's love, there's laughter,  
And there's you—  
And time to watch a butterfly.*



## *Now or Never*

*Let's treat it, dear, as though today  
Were all there is before us;  
And make each second count its share  
Of love and living for us!*



## *Finishing Touch*

*The decorators had their day;  
The carpenters have gone away,  
And in our home, all bright and new,  
Debate reigns over what to do  
About outside. Trees and flowers  
Claim our happy planting hours.*

*With me the thing that has the edge  
On other planting is a hedge.  
The artist often gets the blame  
That should go rightly to the frame.  
It takes a hedge, I tell my spouse,  
To make a picture of a house.*



## *Boy Explorer*

*Booted, capped, he enters  
Our south woods on his own.  
He's a sturdy Independent—  
But he isn't all alone.*

*For the tall weeds in the bottom  
Are Knighthood's really great,  
And behind each shagbark hickory  
An Indian lies in wait.*

*The sycamore that's hollow  
Is sea-going—"Man the Pumps!"  
Or he is a carefree cowboy  
Herding scattered stumps.*

*The birds and squirrels chatter  
To a fellow not-quite grown;  
For a woods is full of secrets,  
And you're never all alone!*



## *Boy at Twilight*

*He sits upon a hill against the sky  
And contemplates infinity alone,  
With chin in hand. His eyes are far away,  
Fixed on some dream adults might not condone  
If they could understand. The world about  
Him disappears while unreality  
Turns wholly real as he jets to a star  
Or shines before King Arthur on one knee.  
His dog beside him makes no slightest sound—  
Devotion deep as master is profound.*

## *My Three Weeks in the Hospital*

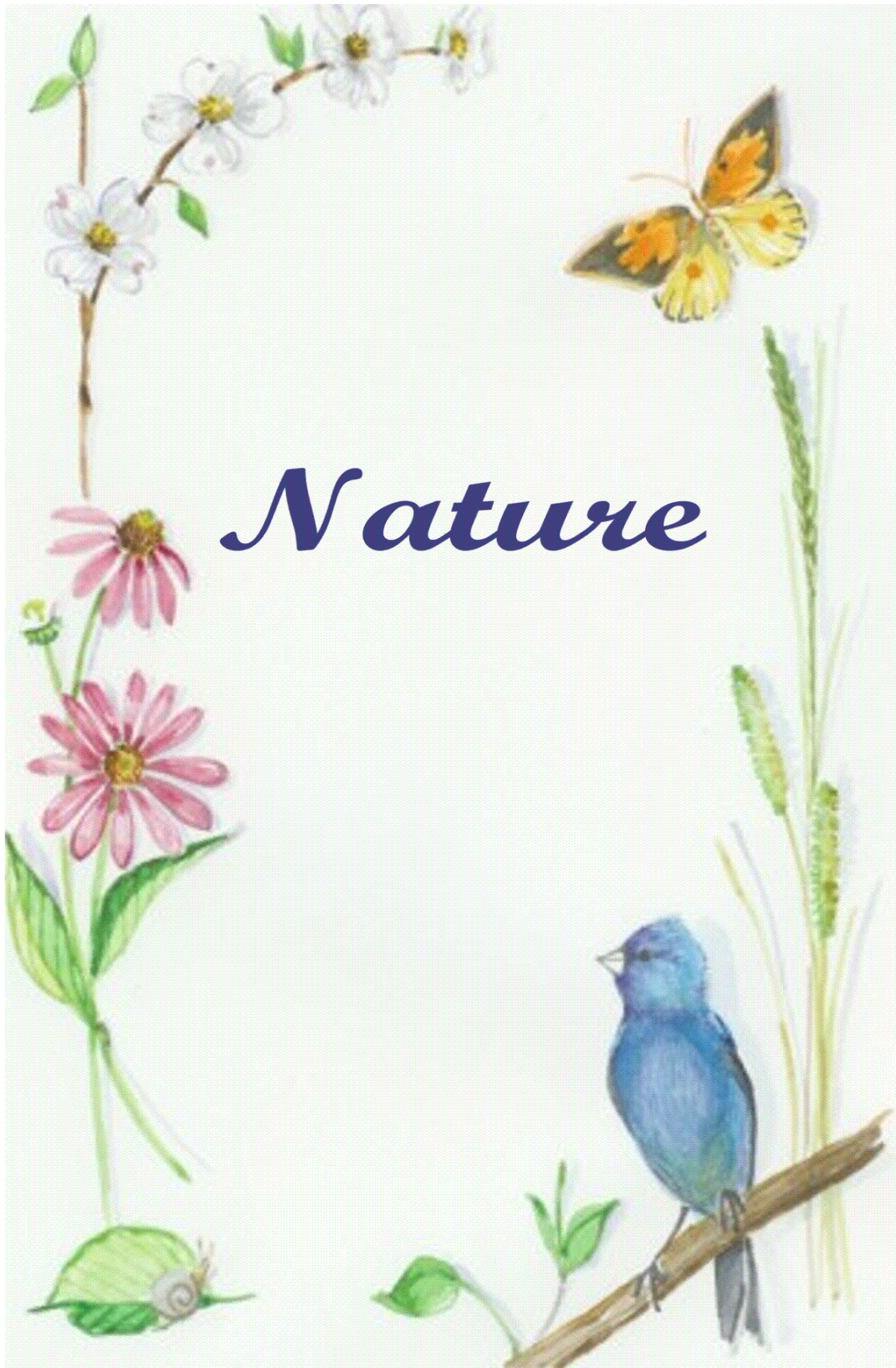
(And How They Would Have Grown Longer but for Trella)



*Two days ago the wrens returned  
(You kept me posted through the pain).  
Today you saw a dogwood bloom;  
Tomorrow I'll be home again.*

*Where back paths seek the river's edge  
We'll stroll there hand in hand, my dear,  
To see the changes in a month,  
And count the ways that spring is here.*







## *Day Off*

*I meant to get things done—I really did—  
But then that thrush would pick that day to pour  
His liquid notes upon the air, and bid  
Me follow him to where the summer's core  
Lay everywhere about.*

*We found nine-bark,  
A yellow-breasted chat, and Queen Anne's lace;  
Bob White, a wildly singing meadow-lark,  
A field of wheat with ever-changing face,  
Sun, through an oak, and, in the roadside dust,  
A butterfly I'd never seen before.*

*Till back at last, it ended, as days must,  
And, pausing with my hand upon the door,  
I add it up. Here is the sum precisely:  
I lived today; the work has kept quite nicely.*



## *After Being in the Woods with an Enthusiast*

*However withered, whorled, or jivey,  
Plants to me are Poison Ivy.  
From Dusseldorf to Attica,  
I ignore Hepatica.*

*And take your Eupatorium—  
I have no uses forium.  
I do not ever go on searches  
For Bloodroot, Dandelion or Birches.*

*Butternuts or Elms or Ashes  
Are so many rooted rashes.  
I'm even apt to hurry faster,  
Should you point me out an Aster.*

*I leave to Nature and to God  
All the forms of Goldenrod.  
And Ragweed is a gay deceiver—  
What is it except Hay-Fever?*

*And though it WALKS or RUNS, a fern  
Fern, to me, is just a Fern!  
The urge it takes to study Botany—  
Could be, I guess, I haven't gotany.*

*The green world, though, you cannot beat it—  
You either have to starve—or eat it...*



# *The Woods To Me*

*(Poem for Trella)*

*In spring, all summer, and through the fall,  
The woods to me is a clarion call—  
What is the woods to you?*

*The woods to me is a catbird's song  
That trickles and trips as it skips along:  
A dogwood's blossoms beneath the moon:  
A flash of butterfly gone too soon—  
What is the woods to you?*

*The woods to me is the flowers of spring  
That brave the snow while winter is King,  
The smell of the dawning bathed with dew,  
An indigo bunting's starling hue—  
What is the woods to you?*

*The woods to me means a path under trees;  
The lazy sunshine, ambitious bees.  
When life is flat and the pleasures pall,  
The woods weaves a melody over it all—  
What is the woods to you?*

*The woods to me is a living book  
Whose pages open when I but look,  
However often observed before,  
What I first see is discovered once more.*

*The woods, to me, is a ringing call  
In spring, all summer, and through the fall—  
What is the woods to you?*



## *Inventory*



*These things in nature I love best;  
A thrush's creamed and spotted breast  
A killdeer's note against the sky;  
The quick wing of a butterfly;  
The wind across a field of grain;  
The sunshine coming after rain;  
A flower blooming all unhailed;  
The stars, when other lights have failed;  
The zest of fall; the smell of spring;  
Soft summer day when hearts shall sing;  
The feel of rest in springy sod;  
I love these best, for these are God.*

## *Resolve*

*I will trade the drab of a ceiling and walls  
For a measure of something green;  
I'll forgo the towns  
With their grays and browns  
For the blue of the skies between.*

*The jeweled flash of a hummingbird,  
The recoil of a touchy bee,  
The sun's last light  
As he says goodnight—  
God meant these things for me.*

*Yes, I want the peace of the fragrant woods  
And the fields as they flower between.  
I will trade my gold  
(It is tarnished and cold)  
For a measure of something green!*

*Bird watching--  
A Brief Dissertation On*

*That bird I'm sure I do not know  
Turns out, of course, to be a crow.*

*What's that that's brown--wings long and narrow?  
Exasperating. English sparrow.*

*Down there! The water-bird! Oh, shucks.  
Mallard--Most plentiful of ducks.*

*And that one with the purple back'll  
Turn out, in time, to be a grackle.*

*Keep looking sharp, and what has wings  
Turns out the commonest of things:  
But fail, just once—avert your eyes—  
And miss the rarest thing that flies!*



## Winter



*Flake on flake, the falling white  
Climbs the disappearing post;  
Sifting through the silent night  
Drops the friendliest of ghosts.*

*The snow stops; then the lightly fanned  
Drifts begin to shift and blow.  
The wind provides the writing hand  
That autographs the restless snow.*

## *Beaten Path*

*Let January breezes  
Have their frigid fling;  
Imagination teases  
Me with thought of spring.*

*For snow, its white perfection  
Hurling towards the lake,  
Knows just which direction  
Apple blossoms take!*



## *Winter's Charms*

*The curves in a quiet landscape  
When the last snowflake is down;  
The song of the trees when the wind-king  
Puckers his fiercest frown;*

*The flickering warmth from a fireplace  
On the coldest night of the year—  
We never look forward to Winter  
But we welcome him once he's here.*

*The moon through a frosted window  
When the stars are cold and dim;  
The creak of the snow crunched under-foot;  
The snap of a shivering limb;*

*Your frozen breath on the silent,  
Frost-cleansed, biting air—  
Who stops and looks and listens  
Finds Winter a jewel fair.*





## *Flighty Hunter*

*The dipper handle this month is our guide;  
We round its curve to reach Artcurus' glare,  
The light by which Boötes' mighty stride  
Tries futilely to catch a Polar bear.*

*The curve continues on to Spica where  
The jeweled Virgin sits, serene and sage.  
Her diamonds sparkle while she probes this flair  
For antics in a man Boötes' age!*

## *Feathered Thermometer*

*So cold it is, the Chickadee  
Who almost nothing fears,  
Sits shivering--his black stocking-cap  
Pulled tight around his ears.*



# *Spring, Gentle Spring, How I Miss Thee!*

*(Villanelle)*

*O Winter, grisly, icy thing  
Of barren white and indigo,  
Wilt thou make way when comes the Spring?*

*Thy fabric-piercing, awful sting  
Makes thee Dame Nature's greatest foe,  
O Winter, grisly icy thing.*

*To just this hope thy victims cling,  
Who suffer, cheeks and shins aglow:  
Wilt thou make way when comes the Spring?*

*Thy breath hast stilled the lilting wing  
That caused the happy brook to flow,  
Oh Winter, grisly icy thing.*

*All hope almost abandoning,  
We wonder, as we see fresh snow,  
Wilt thou make way when comes the Spring?*

*One day a flash of Bluebird's wing  
Shall tell us what we sought to know:  
O Winter, grisly icy thing,  
Wilt thou make way when come the Spring?*

## *March of April*

*An April day! The sun cracks though a rift  
In stubborn clouds and lays a sudden hand  
Upon the wind, which warms in turn the land  
So every bud can feel the coming shift  
To Summer's reign. And what a buoying lift,  
To us, who tire of March, and March's brand  
Of winter, in seeing April gain the upper hand.*

*But quickly gone is April's gift:  
A smartly scudding cloud just overran  
The sun, and brr-r-r—we have our March again!*



## *Thirty-day Queen*

*Away with care—erase the frown;  
April's touching field and town.  
The grassy plot below the hill  
She's yellowed with the daffodil.*

*In the creek, glad waters race  
Reflections of her laughing face;  
Bursting buds and busy birds  
Find praise for her outdoing words.  
Happily lilted on her way  
She's unperturbed by the thought of May!*



## *Lines on a Spring Morning*

*The thrush from the thicket,  
The leaves on the trees,  
All in their fashion  
Greet mornings like these.*

*Some days are average;  
Others are gray—  
But the thirty-one happiest  
We label "May."*



## *Gardening Gusto*

*I find my gardening enthusiasm  
Survived that early seed-ordering spasm  
Beautifully, but now it's fading  
That the time is here for spading.  
Consequently, I am knowing  
There won't be ANY left for hoeing!*



# Summer



## *The Sun and the Rain*

*Over the lush and living land  
The Sun and the Rain move hand in hand.*

*Through rutted lane and bee-topped clover  
One retires and the other takes over.*

*Unlike in nature; still they find  
Harmony of a different kind:*

*A little taking, and more of giving  
Result in useful, gracious living.*

*The Rain approaches and feeds the brook,  
While the Sun peaks through for a mirrored look.*

*And the Rain provides for the flower that dries,  
While the Sun sets jewels in butterflies.*

*The Rain and the Sun passed here today,  
And dropped off summer on their way!*





## *July Morning*

*Another white-hot angry dawn  
Is marching up the sky  
To enhance the reputation  
Of a whiter-hot July.*

*And the mists across the lowland  
In the fan-rays read their end,  
As the weeds, relieved of dew-drops  
Imperceptibly unbend.*

*The scarecrow holds one arm across  
His unprotected eyes,  
And stares in fascination  
At the light-stirred vicious flies.*

*One more ferocious brassy dawn  
Goes striding up the sky  
To pour a molten section  
For the structure that's July.*



### *Water-Logged Week*

*I make this dry, dry observation  
The rain stops. Also my vacation.*

### *July Monster*

*The heat, a live thing, grows each day,  
Hiding in some sidewalk crack  
By Night, until its parent sun  
At dawn alerts a fresh attack.*

*Yet, animated though it is,  
Impossibly and fiercely stout,  
Heat oddly is not tangible  
Enough to do a thing about.*

# *Fall*



## *September Song*

*Today looks the same as a day in July:  
The heat-waves still rise toward the sun-tortured sky;  
Continuing rains  
Have the grass showing gains,  
And the shade of the trees still invites passersby.*

*The once-graceful willow is starting to sag;  
And the jumps of the sleepy old grasshopper lag.  
Although subtle and still.  
You can hear, if you will,  
The steps of the heat-weary summertime drag.*

## *Migrant*

*The summer has slid gently into fall  
With little fuss and no fanfare at all  
Beyond some mornings touched with frost,  
And leaves a brighter hue, or gently lost.  
Now southward bound, a handsome butterfly  
Beats brown and black against a turquoise sky  
In search of southern scene, some warmer clime—  
Homesick already for the summertime!*

*June 25, 1945*

## *Forerunner*

*October's here; the day is fair;  
The sun has warmed the night-chilled air.  
With every gust of zesty breeze,  
Leaves are taking leave of trees  
To form a rug of varied hue  
Upon the lawns and avenue.*

*And yet despite this summer's day,  
A note of winter has its say,  
For this same wind today would go  
So very well with ice and snow!*

*January 24, 1946*

## *Means to an End*

*A caterpillar on the walk  
Is heading for a flower-stalk;  
And though his bobbing head is down,  
I sense his forehead wears a frown.  
You'd hurry, too, like anything,  
If you'd a Butterfly-date with spring!*

*October 24, 1946*

## *Insect Calendar*

*Bees around a puddle  
Usher in the spring  
We're aware of summer  
When cicadas sing.*

*Crickets pipe a litany  
Any time at all;  
But butterflies on asters  
Advertise the fall.*

*May 13, 1952b*

*Christian Scientist Monitor, September 12, 1952*

## *October Observation*

*Every nutty male squirrel  
Is glad his Mrs. is a girrel.*

*October 13, 1946*



## *Caledonia Patch*

*The wind blows bleakly autumn from the west  
To stir late leaves on one sturdy oak  
That blushes hotly for less modest folk.*

*A goldfinch clinging to a swaying weed  
Pries lustily to crack a stubborn seed,  
His song, as he loops gracefully away,  
Mocks gently at this "melancholy" day.*

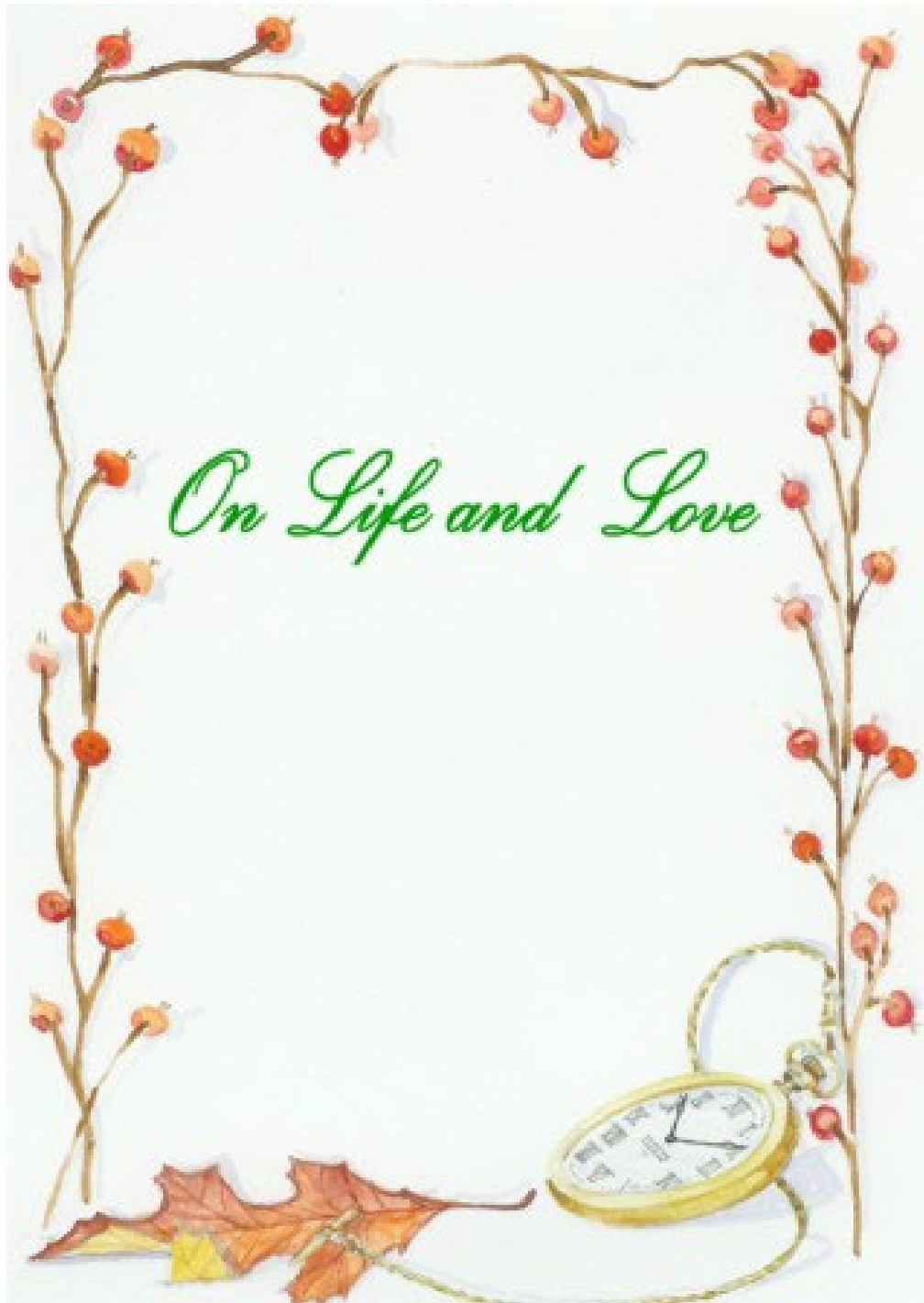
## *Hope Note*

*Wind-tossed trees beneath the clouds  
Straining after whirling leaves  
Typify the autumn season  
Earth at summer's passing grieves.  
But one quick break in all the grayness  
Shows us stars again—or sun.  
The heavenly bodies, eyes of summer  
To buoy us through cold winter's run.*

*March 20, 1953*

*True Confessions Magazine, May 28, 1953*





## *Unexempt*

*Only storms and rain and wind  
Move about undisciplined:  
Catbirds, roses, Javanese  
Have responsibilities.*

*Yet the rain and storms must move  
In a kind of well-worn groove;  
And birds and blossoms, loss and gain,  
All depend upon the rain.*

*January 19, 1946  
New York Times, 1955*

## *Overhead*

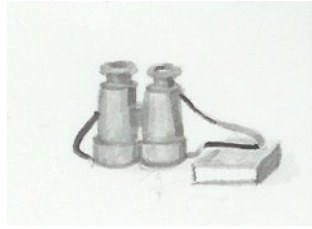
*When skies are blue, and Nature sings,  
My spirit soars on carefree wings;*

*The most of us are tuned a bit  
More with the skies than we admit.*

*October 15, 1946  
Denver Post, August 15, 1952*

## *Note to My Grandchildren*

*Don't call me "old" when I can thrill  
To the yellow of a daffodil.  
Each unseen wind that faintly blows  
Takes me along. A scarlet rose  
Will stop me, breathless, on the path.  
I nightly brace the first star's wrath  
By claiming it for mine. My dears  
Thoughts are not hampered by the years.*



## *In Defense of the Man with Binoculars*

*In pain, Time lingers on whose hands  
No vital interest commands;*

*But who gives ear while Nature sings  
Sees fair Time fly on silver wings.*

*Choose, then: long life of irritation,  
Or a shorter one of pure elation.*

*November 15, 1951b*

## *Average Man*

*My moisture content's figured out;  
They know my breathing rate,  
How many hairs I have, about,  
My stride, my pulse, my weight.*

*They've nosed into the soap I use,  
The sort of books I read,  
What kinds of meats that I refuse,  
Which stimulants I need.*

*They know what makes me fast or slow;  
They've my corpuscles counted;  
They're sure which hurdles lay me low,  
And which I have surmounted.*

*Yet, charted, indexed, analyzed,  
For all the world depictable,  
I've that last word so dearly prized,  
By staying unpredictable.*

*August 11, 1950a*

*Saturday Evening Post, January 5, 1953*

## *Misfit*

*I respond to dawns,  
And sunsets sway me;  
But crowds and parties  
Only fray me.*

*I love the sun  
And tree-warped shade;  
Dislike the lighting  
Man has made.*

*Life's puzzles  
Never bore  
But business trivia  
Somewhat floor me.*

*I like a bird's  
clear melody;  
But opera  
I cannot see.*

*The show of stars  
Thrills me at night;  
But stage and night-club  
Bring on fright.*

*Who loves a free  
Untrammeled state  
Is just a million  
Years too late.*

*March 30, 1946*

## *No Swim, No Sun, No Fish, No Fun*

*No weather prophet, normally,  
I predict, sans hesitation,  
The summer's coldest week will be  
The one of my vacation.*

April 28, 1950

## *I'm Listening*

*Your argument's logical, foolproof and strong;  
I have no rebuttal to fit it.  
I don't so much mind your proving me wrong,  
But please don't demand I admit it.*

November 15, 1951

Saturday Evening Post, January 3, 1952

## *Voice in the Garden Wilderness*

*There is spading and hoeing and weeding;  
There is bending and swearing and sweat;  
The short-cuts about which I've been reading  
Just haven't materialized yet.*

*If it's arteries you want to harden—  
It is said here with no thought of mirth—  
You are nearer hard work in a garden  
Than anywhere else on earth.*

June 25, 1950



## *Age Speaking*

*I now see things I've missed  
Which might have changed the taste  
Of this, my share of strife.*

*The man does not exist  
Who can afford to waste  
One second of his life.*

April 30, 1944  
Ohio State Journal

## *I Discourse on Me*

*I don't have a lot of talent,  
And I own about a dime;  
Still I'm not so full of envy,  
For I'm rather glad I'm I'm.*

*You may wade in countless shekels,  
Be content and witty too;  
Yet I wouldn't trade you places,  
For—it's obvious—you're you.*

*I'll not hide beneath a bushel—  
Nor retire upon a shelf—  
There is hope, and plenty of it,  
If one sort of likes oneself!*

*September 8, 1947*

## *Self-Analysis*

*There is quite a percentage of evil in me,  
And the barest iota of good—  
Reverse the proportions, you say, dear friend?  
That's sweet—but I knew you would!*

## *Epitaph*

*This was Romine—here he lies  
At rest below his butterflies.*

*He liked to write and draw and blow  
His horn--until he had to go.*

*Let your tears and grief be curbed:  
It's tranquil here—he's undisturbed.*

*October 30, 1946*

## *Afterword*

In the 1940s Ray and I had been friends for several years and we shared many interests—gardening, birding and the great outdoors. Both living in Marion, both recently divorced, we each talked of building a greenhouse to expand our hobbies. But since we were both frugal, we joked with our friends that we decided to marry and build only one greenhouse.

But our affection was deeper than that. I admired Ray for his collections of Lepidoptera and stamps, for his hybridizing of iris, for the poetry he wrote (that he always called “light verse”).and for his ability to squeeze so much into every minute of every day. He must of have found something in me that prompted him to ask me to marry him. I still cherish the cluster of hickory nuts I held in my hand on that moment fondly remembered.

From Marie Thomas we purchased eighteen acres along both sides of the Whetstone River southwest of Caledonia, Ohio. Ray named it “Terradise” because to us it seemed we had found “Heaven on Earth.” Here we had our house built and moved in on September 1, 1953—a sweltering hot day. Moving day for us included furnishings and the usual accumulations from two houses, but also Ray’s 3,000 iris seedlings--carefully dug, labeled and stored in cigar boxes until ground could be prepared to receive them--and his Lepidoptera collection of butterflies and moths, most of them mounted in 50 in cases. And of course--his files of verses.

Our new household also included my two children from my previous marriage, Kathy and David Haldeman, ages 12 and 8. We treasured visits from Ray’s daughter, Sandra Romine. While these personal details do not usually accompany a book of poetry, they will help you understand these verses.

Terradise, April 2006



Trella Hemmerly Haldeman Romine.



## *The Illustrator*

Patti Sharpe is a free-lance artist with a degree in botany from Miami (Ohio) University. Her love of the natural world is reflected in her art.

For twenty-five years her paintings have been used commercially for fashion fabrics, ceramics, package designs, and dinnerware. Her illustrations for the book of essays *The Way Back* by Kirsten Chapman represented a transition from commercial art, providing a new outlet for her talents.

Upon reading some of Ray Romine's poems she became a willing participant in creating this book. Ray, also an illustrator, would have approved of including her artistry to illustrate his poems.

Patti and her husband Don live on their acreage southeast of Marion, Ohio where they indulge in their love of nature.

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