â??My Voiceâ?•: Autoethnographic Poems for a New Beginning

Description

The AutoEthnographer

> My poems are not entirely mine. They belong to the people and events of my passage through life. For once the dam is breached its contents flow unabridged.
> â?? Milton Carp, poet at 91

From MEMORIES:

â??Childhood Memoriesâ?•

I come from Coney Island. Boardwalks and beaches full of lovely peaches.

Amusements and Carney, Steeplechase and Luna Park. See the sideshows, Zip and Pip, Bearded Lady, & Elephant Man.

Wonder Wheel, Thunder Bird, & Cyclone roller coasters. Spill the Milk, Ski Ball, and Bumper Cars with squealing children.

Aroma and sounds abound, plus Nathans. Two hot dogs, mustard, and sauerkraut, bag of crinkle fries, a little salt please.

Orange drink full of pulp. Perhaps, a chow mein sandwich, or roast beef au jus. 5 cents each, quarter is king. Do not forget Shatzkinsâ?? Knishes.

Win a quippy doll or teddy. Are you ready? Yes sir, yes sir, fool the guesser. Scientific analysis of the facial features and characteristics of the eyes, ears, and nose. Over here we guess the year.

Did I tell you I come from Coney Island? Boardwalk and beaches full of lovely peaches.

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From MEMORIES:

â??My Story â?? My Journeyâ?•

Parents visiting Grandma, Toronto, Canada. Mom seven months pregnant. Milton born 3/28/1929, premature, 2 lbs 13 ozs. I am a survivor.

Three months later able to travel, return to Brooklyn. No problem. Prohibition, looking for booze, not babies. Four months old, circumcised in U.S. Polio age two, recovered. 1930â??s depression years, we

get by. Dad works hard, all is good with the world. I am a survivor.

I remember when Flatbush, Brooklyn was farmlands. My school across from farm with tethered butting-goat. Poor goat, we teased it every day. Every blank wall next to a sandlot had a painted strike zone. Life was good. Elementary school, middle, and high school. I graduate.

Three years later I meet Elaine. Whirlwind courtship. Marry January 29, 1951. Drafted into army April of 1951. Basic training Camp Gordon, Georgia, signal corps, teletype operator. Elaine follows, we live off post. For two happy months all is well with the world.

Sent to Germany, September, 1951, Elaine follows. Bavarian Alps. Stuttgart, *Herr und Frau Hagmann, 8 Unterhauser Strasser*. Live in attic, mattress on floor, cook on hotplate, coke box refrigerator, one piece of ice, butter, cold cuts, bottle of *spruddle wasser*. All is well with the world. Elaine pregnant, returns to the sates.

Daughter, Paula, born March 6, 1953. Discharged from army April, 1953. I have a large Canadian birth certificate. Nothing says I am a U.S. citizen. Immigration says I do not exist. I must prove I was in the U.S. before the age of two years.

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My military service means naught. My marriage means naught. My 24 years in the U.S. naught. No criminal record, paid taxes. I am reduced to a paper trail. **I am an illegal!**

Need documentation and a witness or else I will be deported back to Canada. How can my country treat me so? I gave it all I had. I felt betrayed, discounted, yet I still have love of country.

The past and the present are not so different. 90+ years have passed and I find myself akin to the DACA children of today. The sins of the parents should not be visited upon the children. We are the innocents.

I find my circumcision certificate. Mrs. Weinstein vouches for me. I submit my proof and receive my citizenship papers. All is well, not really. I cannot forget that good works do not count. Paper counts. I did not survive. I got my papers, but I lost my respect for authority. I lost myself. I will never be the same. I am bitter. I am disallusioned.

All one has is family. Save all the paper, protect your loved ones, God knows one day they may have to prove they existed. I will fight for my family. I fight now at the voting booth. Ever vigilant. Your vote is mightier than the sword.

Father: Russian

Mother: American

Me: Canadian by birth; American by choice.

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From THE NATURAL WORLD:

â??Boâ?•

Thereâ??s a new guy in the neighborhood, his name is **Bo.**

Who? Bo, thatâ??s who.

He lives out back by the canal, waterfront property. A handsome fellow 8 inches tall. Burrowing owl, commands the room, lets us share his space.

Todayâ??s a photo shoot. Preening first, swivels head 180 degrees, and faces the camera. Satellite disc eyes, dark and sharp, dapple feathers, beige, tan & brown, blends right in.

Comes out to sun in AM and afternoon. In and out of the burrow. I think he knows us. We give a hoot and holler, â??Hoot, hoot, **Bo**, hoot, hoot.â?•

There he is. He knows us. Greets us with his presence and a hoot, hoot, hoot. How long will he stay? Spring, summer, fall, or just September?

He is a jet setter. Flies himself, controls his space, controls his flight.

Hope he stays. We are buddies now. Stay the winter.

Who? My buddy, **BO**, that is who.

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From SOCIETY:

â??Poll Workerâ?•

Thirty plus years I sat on the other side of the table, watching all who entered this sacred polling place, pulling levers, filling in the bubbles. Black ink please.

No talking please. Silence please. Yet in their silence they speak loud and clear. We, the voters, speak volumes from the ballot box. Take your toddler by the hand and bring him/her to the polling place. Now

open to all. Show them by example the power of the lever and the pen.

Better yet teach them their rights as an American, and the power within themselves by the simple act of voting. Simple now, not one hundred years ago, poll tax, literacy test, raw violence.

White womenâ??s right to vote, women of colorâ??s right to vote came not from menâ??s willingness to relinquish power. It came from the suffragettesâ?? hard work and sweat. A countryâ??s sense of right and wrong.

Constitutional Amendment #19, 1920: White women can vote. Half the job now done. Another **45** years **Voting Rights Act August 1965** welcomes women of color to the polling place. Take your place in line. Cast your vote. Expand your chest, be proud, use your hard-earned power. You have made a dent in white privilege. Chipped away at racism, chipped white supremacy, chipped white fragility.

Start the dialog. **Martin** led the **Civil Rights Movement**. Now you must champion your cause. Not by revolution, but by evolution. Tell your truth. Start the dialog. May your tears be tears of joy and wash away the sins of the past and present. There will be a new tomorrow.

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From MUSINGS:

â??Silenceâ?•

Silence is the whispers of the mind.
It is the sound of breathing in and out.
The sound of your beating heart.

Can there ever be true silence when we are bombarded by
the world around us,
the wind,
the rustling of the trees,
autumn leaves upon the ground,
the tree that falls,
life that scurries on the forest floor and in the canopy,
the waves upon the shore,
the din of city traffic,
the noise of humanityâ??s hustle and bustle?

Do we need to be in the city, the forest, or at the shore to hear the rippling effect upon the air we breathe?

Our senses are always turned on. They speak to us by touch, and smell, and sight, and hearing.

I will not know for sure until I cease to exist. Death, my final earthly act, and the start of my next journey, will reveal to me my karma or eternal silence.

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From MUSINGS:

â??When Is RIght Wrong?â?•

Put pen to ink and all is changed, for instance, Bar Mitzvah is a right of passage. Rite? Wrong.

Go wright not left. Right a letter. Right? Wrong. Riht, rhyt, wright.

When one speaks all is right with right. When spoken write is always write.

So, wright means right, not straight ahead, right? Wrong.

Right to left is correct not wrong. It is right.

Also, rite is ritual, and write means writing.

A craftsman, wright, right: one who builds or makes.

A wains wright as in ryte, reht, and wright.

Be careful my friend. Take heed not heâ??d.

To be right one must see the write of it.

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From SELF-DISCOVERY:

â??My Museâ?•

It appears. Awareness, thoughts, coalescing bits and pieces.

Swirling around int he crevices of my mind. Who or what stimulates it?

Muses come and go on their own schedule. Capture the thought. The time is now.

For when the muse recedes back deep inside oneself, return is not always known.

Pen and paper at the ready, close at hand.

Once written, it is for all time, never to be lost.

Find your muse. It is within you. Nurture it. Embrace it, for it is oneâ??s essence. Once hidden, but now exposed. Savor the moment.

Once the awareness is awakened it can never be put to sleep again.

I know for I have been smitten.

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From SELF-DISCOVERY

â??Lifeâ??s Questionsâ?•

How shall I live?
For me?
For others?
For everybody?
For nobody?

How shall I live?
For love?
For lust?
For the moral?
For the immoral?

How shall I live?
For the earthbound?
For the celestial? (spiritual)
How shall I live?

Lots of questions,
answers not clear,
need to process.
Take my time,
sort it all out.
Live my life,
find my answers.

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From GRIEF:

â??I Choose Life â?? Letting Goâ?•

2016, the beginning. March, stroke #1. May, stroke #2. I need help. August, 2016, assisted living. August, 2017, she is old self gain, my wife back home.

Three months heaven then downhill. Two years later Hospice. Darkest day May 14, 2019, donations to Hospice. St. Jude. May 17, 2019, funeral. Soul committed to the universe, so too my heart, body to the

ground.

Depression, sadness, feeling melancholy, path not clear, pondering my direction. What is to become of me? I have her love. I have my life, live, or die? When faced with death choose life.

I choose life. I choose moving forward. Bereavement group, meet fellow mourners. â??Cup of coffee?â?• she asks. Should I? Shouldnâ??t I? Why not? Will call you. Two-hour lunch. Conversation nonstop. Feels good, she is easy to relate to.

One year later, *Yahrzeit*, light candle, say *yizkor*, mindful and respectful. My new life and love continues.

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From GRIEF:

â??Caught the Westboundâ?•

She caught the Westbound at dusk. Sped down the Iron Highway below the horizon. Never to return. Darkness descended covering the earth. Sadness, sorrow, depression, a malaise mixed into the darkness. It hovered overhead. Blackened the light. Dampened the spirit. Time stood still.

She was my beacon. Turned the darkness into light. Lit my path. Guided my way. On my own now a solitary journey. Time to move forward. Leave the darkness. Move into the light. I caught the Eastbound, roared down the Iron Highway, broke out into the light. Blinding light, which way to go? Venture forward. Find my path.

Let the light wash over me. Warm my soul. Start the river of lifeâ??s forces coursing through, complete the healing. Renew the fervor of life, find a new beacon. Reach down deep inside, release the floodgates, create a new life, a new me.

Reunite with family and friends. A new love to share my journey. Touched my creative side. Poetry was my venue. It poured forth from within me. Dormant all these many years. It was my story waiting to be told. Art and crafts to follow. Awareness of self. Reinventing myself, a new image, a new path to be walked, one of my choosing.

AUTHORâ??S MEMO

The AutoEthnographer

I first became interested in poetry after my wife Elaine died and I met Sheila, who belonged to a poetry group and was a poet in her own right. At the poetry group I realized that poetry did not have to rhyme, any story could be poetic if formatted correctly. Since this was a traumatic time for me, poetry was the perfect outlet for my feelings. After my initial mourning I decided to reinvent myself. I became closer to my children whom I rely on much more these days. Sheila became a big part of my life and she mentored me with my poetry. I wrote in the dedication of my book, *My Voice*:

> Out of great loss comes great change. When my beloved wife, Elaine, passed away I was empty, numb. We spent a lifetime together. In that time, we grew together and grew up together. She was my inspiration. Her passing has given me the time to reflect on the future and the path I wish to pursue. This book of poems is the start of my new beginning. It would have not been possible, if not for Elaine. Our marriage of 68 years with all its trials and tribulations has molded me into the man I am today. As it was in life, so it is in death, she guides my way. Many of the poems in this book speak of love and pain and my profound loss. So, I dedicate this book of poetry to you Elaine. I will always love you and miss you.

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