

*BLUEBONNETS,
BOOTS
AND
BUFFALO
BONES*

Sheryl L. Nelms



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Table of Contents

<i>Dedication</i>	7
<i>Bluebonnets</i>	9
Texas Hill Country	10
fresh day	11
AltoCumulus Clouds	12
Meditation	13
The Pharmacist's Daughter	14
Wash Day on the Farm	16
Blue Ticks Eating Asparagus	17
Spring Soundings	18
Sunset at Eagle Mountain Lake	19
breathe deep	20
Downed Hawk	21
from April's palette	22
Their Combs Turn Red in the Spring	23
The Spit Bucket	24
to dust	25

The Old Goodnight Ranch.....	26
Black Birds.....	28
The Fort Worth Tornado.....	29
Moment In Time.....	30
killing the rooster.....	31
The Spirit.....	32
Texas Wheat Harvest.....	33
Outhouse Blues.....	34
The Car.....	35
fishing for monsters.....	36
Visible Echoes.....	38
Cumulus Clouds.....	39
country cream.....	40
ag synthesizer.....	41
Behind Every Ranch House in Texas.....	42
4th of July.....	43
Chicken Canning Time in West Texas.....	44
Blue Heron.....	46
Meteorite Showers.....	47
Heat Waves.....	48
Icicle Radishes.....	49
Aunt Emma Collected Teeth.....	50
East Texas Root Hog.....	51
Great Cormorant.....	52
<i>Boots.....</i>	<i>53</i>
City Life.....	54
Those Crows.....	55
Real Cowboy.....	56
Bull Fighter.....	57
Rodeo Circuit Cowboy.....	58

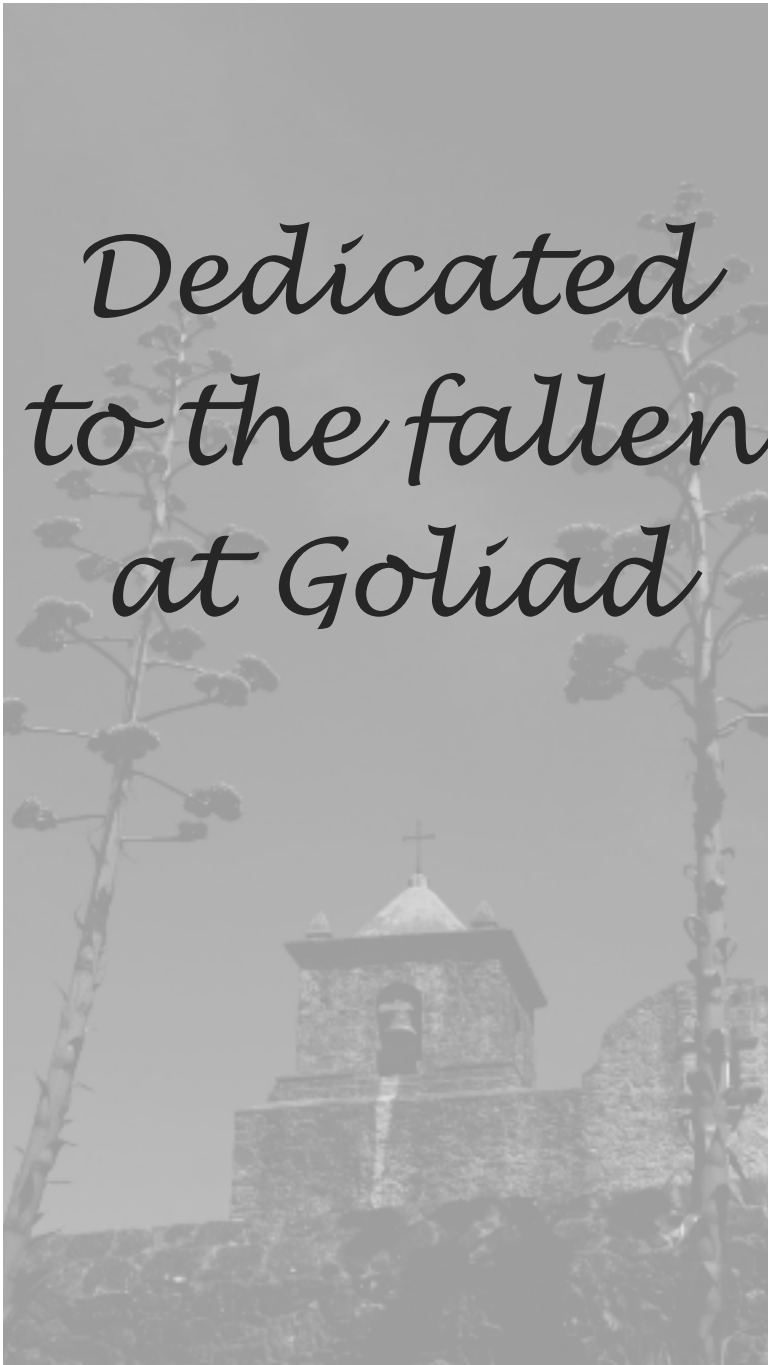
The Brazos River	59
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Female	60
Grandma's Gypsies	61
Grandma's Sunbonnet Quilt.....	62
old lady Wilson.....	63
West Texas Wheat Farmer With Early Alzheimer's	64
Salting Down	65
Picking Granny Smith Apples in West Texas....	66
West Texas Halloween.....	67
Gutting A Diamondback Rattlesnake.....	68
horned toad.....	70
it's raining in Texas.....	71
Frog.....	72
Indian Summer in Bowie, Texas	73
Dragon Fly Wing	74
Parker County Texas Fall.....	75

Buffalo Bones

Evening Thunderstorm on the Callahan Divide 78	
Paleo-Indian Feet.....	79
Josiah Walbarger, Pecan Springs, Texas, August 1883	80
Cirrus Clouds	81
Dallas Farmer's Market.....	82
Houston Street Bag Lady.....	83
The Bag Lady's Ode	84
Rosetta.....	86
Stripping Cotton Blues	88
Alzheimer's: What Year?	90

Cirrostratus Clouds.....	91
The Buzzard Roost	92
The Fort Worth Queen of Cans	93
Blackstrap Molasses.....	94
Sunset in the West Texas Wild Mountains.....	95
Crescent Moon in Texas	96
Rusted Red Ford Pick-Up Truck Full of Turkeys on Farm to Market 1178.....	97
Texas Grasshoppers	98
The Roughneck Woes.....	99
Runnin' Pipe.....	100
Dry Hole Blues	101
Wisteria.....	102
Pelican	103
South-Going Geese	104
Real Talent.....	105
Texas Rangers Baseball	106
Winter Words.....	107
Texas Blue Norther.....	108
West Texas Blizzard.....	109
Texas Ice Storm.....	110
The Orchard Spider.....	111
Remember Goliad	112
Texas Trawl	114
<i>Biography</i>	<i>115</i>
<i>Publishing Credits.....</i>	<i>117</i>

*Dedicated
to the fallen
at Goliad*





Bluebonnets

Texas Hill Country

spring is
working its
way north
the meadows
around Fredericksburg
are blooming
full of bluebonnets
black-eyed Susan
Indian paintbrush
and buttercups
splatters of red
yellow and
blue
flung from
the artist's full
brush
across emerald
grass

fresh day

I hear a rooster

somewhere
back there in
the clutter of
rusty cars
sunflowers
cockleburs
and barbwire

crowing in
the morning

ready to
go

Alto cumulus Clouds

like ginned
cotton

dumped
over the horizon

they trail
sunset

in thin
filaments

of iridescence

Meditation

a quarter section
of hybrid

sunflowers

in a west Texas
field at sundown

reminds me
of a congregation

of pioneer women
praying

The Pharmacist's Daughter

It was August first 1955

I knocked on their glass door
collecting on my paper route
for the Sweetwater Register

old man Dimmers owned the drugstore
and they had a real
nice two-story house

I started to knock
again

when I saw Mary Alice
prancing down
that staircase

one step
at a
time

in her black bra
and panties

she was sixteen and
all of her was jiggling

I was ten years old
and I never
ever

saw anything
like that
before

she swung that door wide open

“Hey, Russell,” she said

“Come on in. I’ll
find your money”

but I turned and left
didn’t say nothing

never could catch my breath
never did get my
money

Wash Day on the Farm

is a philharmonic
production

drag out the twin rinse tubs
the Maytag
the bucket
the stool
and the stick

snap down the wringers
hook up the hose

add hot water
homemade lye soap
and the blueing

then carry in
the clothes

sort them into piles

lightest by lightest
dirtiest by dirtiest

pull the red knob
on the washer

dump in the whites
clamp on the lid

the symphony
has begun

Blue Ticks Eating Asparagus

five
killer dogs
bay and bugle
in anticipation
of the green stalks
she holds
one by one
she tosses
each long shoot
of asparagus
off the
porch
up into the air
to be caught in
a gaping mouth
to watch
it slide
unnoticed
down each throat
with the
“Say what?”
look
treat
enough
for her

Spring Soundings

I hear them

Canadian geese
up there

in the black

then that veering
slipstream tilts
comes in
low

over city lights

honking
spring

North

Sunset at Eagle Mountain Lake

ponderosa pines susurrate
in the gentled
breeze

fuchsia frosts
rippled waves

migrating pelicans
swirl white
down

onto water

Canadian geese
squawk over
the green

of winter wheat

a flock of wood ducks
seines the shallows
for snails

as the scent
of cedar

twangs tomorrow

on the full
moon

breathe deep

whole wheat bread
baking a crisp crust
on a December morning

a cedar shelter belt
after a sudden shower

fresh mown Timothy hay
under the July sun

hamburgers grilling
over a charcoal fire

red clover
blooming
in a Texas field

apple muffins
split and steaming cinnamon
as the butter melts

a Peace rose
in a crystal bowl
on my kitchen table

my baby boy
bathed and powdered
cuddling against my cheek

life is full
just breathe
deep

Downed Hawk

wings drooping

he huddles

beside Highway 35

like a defeated

Comanche

warrior

under a

reservation

blanket

from April's palette

the morning sky
over west Texas is
a translucent wash

of cobalt
blue

splotched by
a wet brush
fling

of titanium white

that ran
just so

into swirls
over the red
hills

along the Palo Duro Canyon

Their Combs Turn Red in the Spring

you see the girls
laying out
around the lake

in halter
tops
and bikinis

working on their tans

and the guys
just hangin' around
lookin'

and I think of them stud roosters
Mom used to keep

The Spit Bucket

Whenever me
and my sister

went to visit great granddad Bobo

I always had to go
to the bathroom

We'd be stuck indoors,
because he was sick
had a stoke, Mama said
and we would carry all of his meals
to him and help feed him

Bobo only had an outhouse
but I never wanted to go
out there, because

Once I did
and it was full of daddy-long-legs
tap-dancing on the door
slimed slugs
and huge black scorpions

It smelled so awful
It was dark and slippery in there

I was petrified

Bobo would always say,
"Just go over there in my spit bucket, girl!"

So I did

to dust

west Texas farmers live in dread
of spring winds
whipping

planted fields

stirring grains
of dirt

that beat
on each other

until whole sections are blown

in black billows
that smother

green

The Old Goodnight Ranch

softly
like an archeologist
dusting artifacts
I probe this west Texas homestead

as I move through the kitchen
a mud dauber floats
up to the nest
behind the stove pipe

bees pop in
through the cistern hole
beside the enameled sink

mouse droppings litter the kitchen floor

a black high button shoe
props
the back door
open

glancing out, I see the barn

broken
along the front corner seam
boards split apart
like a pair of hands
unclasped

and in the sky
over the windmill
a zig zag of crows

drifts

across the

orange

sun

down

Black Birds

the spatter
of black
against
blue sky
expands
into a wave
undulating up
over the windbreak

then as
if on command
they pivot
a notch
higher
and flow
back over

the cedars

with a quick flip
they turn
and go
south

like a Venetian
blind

flashing
black to nothing
to black

The Fort Worth Tornado

chunks of green
mirrored
glass

sucked
from the Continental Plaza Building

cart-wheeled
up Main Street

followed
the funnel

east over
the Trinity River

slipped
slivers into

Arlington
Grand Prairie
and Dallas

reflecting the wind

Moment In Time

at the Thurber Steak House
a ruby-throated hummingbird

pauses on

the red tulip feeder
outside the window

his toothpick beak
probes deep for
pink sugar
water

that the snaking
tongue laps
up

whirring wings
into an animated iridescence

that arrows
the body
away

killing the rooster

Gramps held the rooster
with his left hand
and swung the
ax with his right

the silver edge
sliced clean
and whumped
into the elm stump
where it stuck
handle up

the red-combed
head lay
staring
off of the stump
looking sideways across the garden

at the bronze body
flapping wings
lunatic hopping
gushing blood
and feathers

out among the rows
of green onions

The Spirit

it's there in the
earthworm smell
of fresh plowed loam

it's there in the
Levi work shirt

it's there in the
worn linoleum
and the squeaking Dempster windmill

I see it in those sun weathered wrinkles

it's there in every
rancher

each time it
rains on

fresh sown seed

Texas Wheat Harvest

plump
tan kernels
loll in the June sun
waiting
to be
picked up
by the churning clippers
rolling along
through
the riptide
spraying straw
in a golden
wake

Outhouse Blues

so much of my early
life was spent
suspended

above that black
and gargoyled
pit

hanging there
in the cold ammonia draft

remembering the horror
stories of a cousin
who disappeared
forever

when he was
grabbed
from

below

The Car

She's a beauty. A 1931
Ford. Original owner.
Bought her new, when he was twenty-one.
He's eighty years old now. They
took his driver's license
away. Said he couldn't
see good enough to drive.
So he parked his car.
Got her up on blocks in
his garage. He goes
out there and washes and
waxes her every Saturday.

I never saw any car
have such a shine.
It's got a rumble
seat and the factory
upholstery. It is all in
mint condition.

Shiny black.

She's for sale. That's
how I found her. I'm
going to buy her.

He lets me sit in her
on Sunday afternoons, when
she's all cleaned up.

What a car!

fishing for monsters

it was dough balls
and stink bait
mixed days
before

then we had to wait
for the night
of the full
moon

we'd go at dusk
to Lake Whitney

spread out Grandma's old quilt

bait the hooks
loft them out
set the tensions and wait

in the hot July night
with the water-cooled breeze
chattering the cottonwood leaves

we would listen
for the whine of a reel
or the flop of a giant cat

as the cicadas packed seventeen years of buzz
into one blitz

and late in the night we would eat
white bread sandwiches
of cheddar cheese and mustard

and I would squint
at the moon-rippled water
from my spot
between Mom
and Dad

and imagine
my life

Visible Echoes

it rained last night

today the
timber is full
of frogs

I stop to listen

every tree
each blade of grass
hides

a frog

and back there
in the dark
green pond

their croaks
ripple

across the water
in circled

grooves of sound

Cumulus Clouds

a gallon of
rich

country cream

hand-whipped
into stiff
peaks

flung
from the beater

into dollops
across the blue oilcloth

country cream

I wish I could slip back
into that bedroom

with the lilac scented breeze
fluffing the starched and stretched
Irish lace curtains

Big Ben ticking
and the "Girl Watching Robin" print

to my grandmother
with her white hair and quiet talk
who gave me credit for worthy thoughts

to the turtle dove coos
drifting in from the walnut tree

to the embroidered pillow case
and the love that swaddled me
from the world

when life was full
of afternoon naps
under the whir
of Philco fan
blades

back to that precious time
when the way
was easy

and the mulberries hung ripe
ready to fill the
evening

ag synthesizer

cocooned in his combine cab

headphones tuned to Bach
windshield tinted cool-ray
air filtered and conditioned

he moves
through the milo field

free of the dust and itch
of the harvest

crops and livestock completely computerized

still called
“just a farmer”

by big city folks

Behind Every Ranch House in Texas

porches
perch
on top
of sandstone steps
wait
with their cistern pumps
white enameled sinks
and bars of Lava
to pumice cotton planting
from calloused skin
five gallon buckets full
of sweet well water
ask to be sipped
from tin
dippers
to wash down
filed dust
overalls
and flannel shirts
back the doors
beg for tired
bodies
to settle in
waiting
for the chance
to smooth the edge
of ranch
life

4th of July

there is something
in the day
spent at

the Fort Worth
tractor pull

watching the fireworks
at Sweetwater Lake

or eating watermelon
at the Mitchell family reunion
in China Spring, Texas

there is something
in the day
in the way
of life
we

have here
in Texas

it just feels
good

Chicken Canning Time in West Texas

Momma always said,
"Russell I need twenty-five chickens today"

I'd get
a coat hanger
from the closet

go behind the barn
sprinkle some corn
in the dirt
and hook

those chickens
one by
one

as they trotted around
the corner

I'd wrap their legs
with bailing wire

and drape them
over the clothesline

Momma snipped
each one down

whipped the
head off

and turned them loose
my old dog, Tuffy

would go berserk

chasing that flock

of bloody

headless chickens

Blue Heron

Sweetwater Lake is
evaporating fast

now it is nothing
but a mud bay

knobby
with cedar stumps

and out in the middle
a blue heron dabbles

stalks
on stilts

slices out a whiskered bullhead

then bobs
the lump

down

Meteorite Showers

like a poked
pine log

burning in the fireplace

the glistened spatter
of shattered
moons

ripples across the black
velvet of

Texas
sky

Heat Waves

August sun
ricochets

up
from

fresh asphalt

radiates
into blue sky

evaporates clouds
before

they
are

Icicle Radishes

Gramps would pull a fist
full of white
radishes
long and fat
covered with
black loam
he'd wash them
behind the garage
with the green garden hose
massaging their plumpness
until the dirt
was gone
then take them in
to the north porch
where we'd sit
munching into pithed
coolness
of icicle radishes
dipped in
salt

Aunt Emma Collected Teeth

at night
when the senile
were contained by
their roll-bars
and tie-downs
she would flit out
shadow down the halls
with her sewing
basket
collect their unmouthed
dentures from the
bedside water
glasses
like some pearls being shucked
those bare gums knew
tried to tattle
but all the nurses ever did
was confiscate her basket in the morning
and shuffle out
the teeth
to those minus them
never did get all
the bites right
they said
even after Emma died

East Texas Root Hog

we could always tell
when the hounds trapped
another armadillo
under the
house
because it
would go to jumping
and thumping up
against
the floorboards
knocking
and knocking
until we couldn't stand it
no more
and we'd all have to
go out there
no matter what time
and get a
hold of all
them dogs
and Grandma would crawl
under the house
with her broom
and whisk it
until the darn thing
waddled out
so cool

Great Cormorant

black
wings whisper

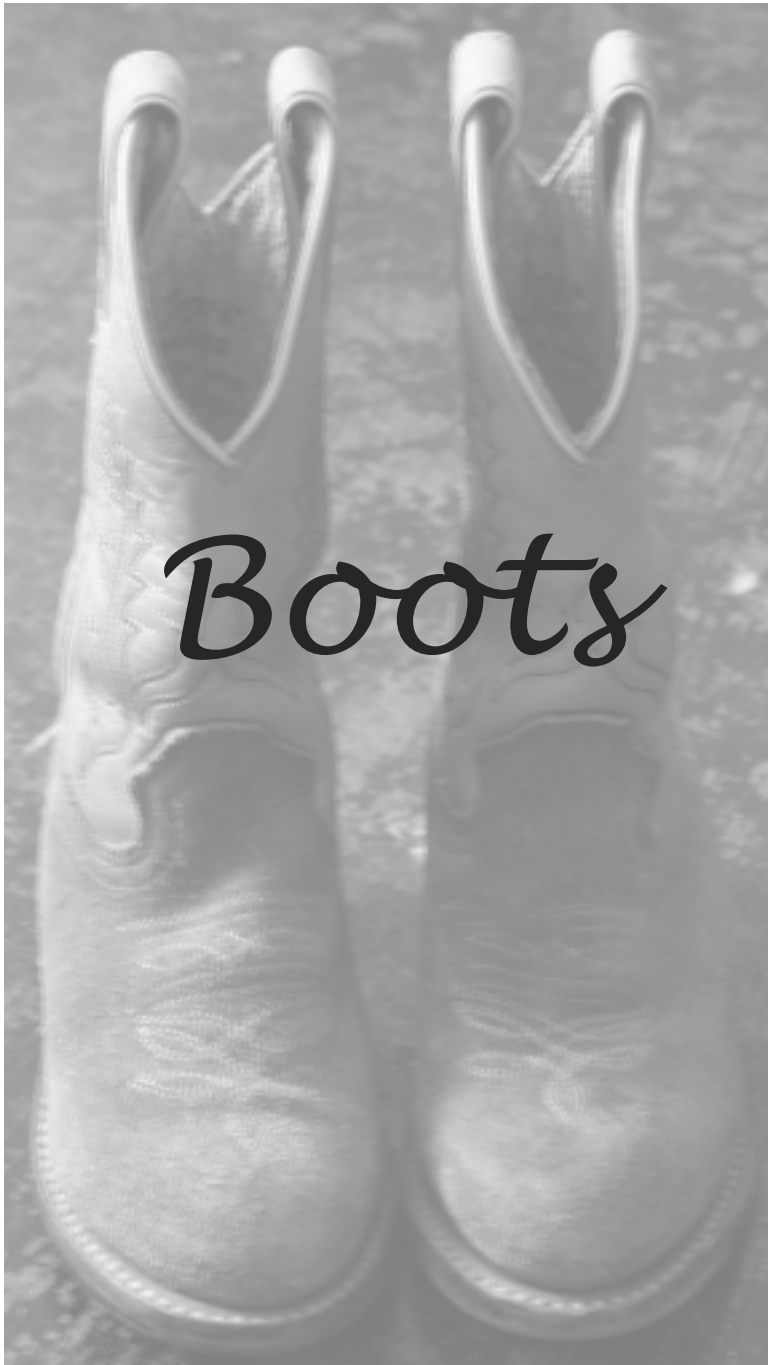
fervent as
a prayer

into
blue sky

circle
Clyde Lake

swoop in
to

land



City Life

at dawn
when Mercury
still hangs
in the west
and scattered
night clouds
begin to turn pink
around the edges

and street lights
down across Trinity Valley
sparkle
bright
through the rising
river mist

and a row
of crows
lifts off
out of the cottonwoods
along the water

to become black
silhouettes
in the morning sun

city life doesn't seem so bad

Those Crows

floating close
to the ground

zig zagging across the park

up over
the water sprinklers

they laugh
to each other
as they fly

like a bunch
of teenagers
testing

the limits

Real Cowboy

“Them rodeo
cowboys
are just
another kind
of pro athlete

just a fine tuned machine

now you take
an old boy
that’s been out
there brush
poppin
them cows
outa mesquite thorns

now there’s a real
cowboy

but he probably
wouldn’t do
no good
in pro rodeo
he’d be too
damn slow

he’s just a hard working
good old boy”

Bull Fighter

he glides me around
the dance floor
in delicate
four four
steps

I marvel at the moves

of his
stubby body

a balloon
blown

to the precise point
before it pops

full black beard

balding head
covered with

a straw Stetson

he's the
third clown
in every rodeo

the one they
call the

barrel man

Rodeo Circuit Cowboy

you seen one
you seen
them
all

every one is
the same

a rodeo here
or on down
the road

Mesquite or Abilene or Stamford

the bulls
broncs
cowboys
and the girls

it's all happened before

I don't watch
anymore

just get a grip
and ride

The Brazos River

smart weed and nettles droop out over the water
a shadow tunnel
of limbs hangs
over a slow boil
of mudded water
that roils around
limestone boulders
behind a dam of flood debris
a cottonmouth floats
limp
then instantly the
snake swizzles
cross current
and disappears
under the riverbank
silver dorsal fins
of spawning carp
poke up
in the shallows
of a gravel bar
a fish ring ripples
in the current
then another
further downstream
but they're gone before they grow

Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Female

she emerges slowly
jerking, resting, jerking

long black legs
out first

tentative testing, then clutch
pulling the crimped wings along

a final spastic jerk
and the plump
black velvet abdomen is free

wrinkled little wad of
crinkled yellow tissue paper

resting, pumping, resting
she clings tenaciously to
the empty green chrysalis

pumping unfolds
brilliant velvet hues

yellow, black and cobalt blue

Grandma's Gypsies

she fed a whole tribe
once

they came begging
at her back door

she took them
to the cellar

loaded them up
with jars and jars of
fermented dill pickles

they went away happy
never came back
she said

Grandma's Sunbonnet Quilt

Iva and Eva pieced it
from flour sacks
back in the winter of 1888
they trimmed hundreds
of material slices
then sewed them
together in the kerosened halo
through blizzard-blanketed
west Texas nights
their precise stitches
marching in
three-fourths inch time
through three generations
those threads have
come to spread
into my life
to hold me
together
now

old lady Wilson

she had money
lots of money

saved it by
walking on the Fort Worth Star-Telegram

said that way
she never had to
scrub or wax the floor
and didn't have to buy a mop or broom

saved it by
recycling birthday cards
and Christmas gifts people gave to her

said that way
she knew they would like what they got

saved it by using
one flush
a day

said she kept
the lid
down

and any company she ever had
never stayed long enough
to flush

but she had money
lots of money

*West Texas Wheat Farmer
With Early Alzheimer's*

round and
round

and round
he went

over his
eighty
acres

he drove

his John Deere tractor
pulling the twenty-four row

wheat planter

never noticed
he had no
seed

never noticed
he didn't
have to
stop

for more

Salting Down

it was Grandma
dipping wash rags
in salted
water

one after
another

after another

on through the magnoliad night
before his funeral

that kept Grandpa
from turning

kept him decent
for the burying
she said

*Picking Granny Smith Apples
in West Texas*

green
and tart

they hang

in the sultry
August
sun

clumped
together by

threes

waiting for
the twist
of

harvest

West Texas Halloween

the yellow bloom
of broom-weed
fills the overgrazed pasture
a mistletoed snarl of
mesquite tree
pokes up
here
and there
flash of white
tail ruffles
the green swoop
of live oak
branches
that sway
in the warm breeze
thin necks of wild
turkeys
wave this way
a javelina
climbs
the limestone hillside
an October's
full moon
slips over
the Callahan Divide

*Gutting A Diamondback
Rattlesnake*

at the Sweetwater
Round-Up

the Jaycees
clean them

six at
a time

rattles
looped into

nooses

one slick
slice

down each
white belly

as bloody fingers
grab the

slim
intestines

a quick
jerk and heft
into a blue barrel

then the sleek
peel of
meat

from scaled
skin

brings twenty-six dollars
a pound

horned toad

a big brown devil

sits on
my sleeping bag

flicking
a quick tongue
at the plump
red ants

skittering across
the lumpy landscape

I retreat

leave nature
to balance
herself

it's raining in Texas

grey clouds skim
low and slow

just clearing
the tree
tops

rain

scatters
down across
the bur oak grove

spatters the leaves

like sand
sifted
onto

waxed paper

a crizzled crow call
cracks the
grey

from back in the timber

rubbery
croaks of
green frogs

bounce out
of the cracks

Frog

He hangs
just below
the surface
of slimed water
bumpy marble eyes
jut out
like a submarine surfacing
He hangs
a limp lump
until I
lean to look
then he's gone
in a swirling wiggle
of green scum

Indian Summer in Bowie, Texas

a toasted breeze
ripples
chartreuse orbs
of bodark
apples
oak leaves
crinkle
yellow and crimson
through the timber
a flock of grackles
settles into
dusty tree tops
sumac veins
blaze red
across the pasture
pumpkins scatter
orangeness
between bales
of timothy
hay
as the crescent
moon cleaves
October

bodark - Texas rendering of bois d'arc, known in other areas as bowdark, Osage Orange, hedge apples, of the mulberry family, prized for bow wood.

Dragon Fly Wing

squares radiate
from the wing joint

like spread fingers
webbed together

square to square to square
of crackling cellophane

an iridescent shimmer

as I tip it
to the light

Parker County Texas Fall

cottonwood leaves
yellowed by

the first frost

dangle over
the meadow grasses
fluff of seeds

cedars rock
to and fro
as the wind

shifts

with the whip
of cold air

a squirrel chatters
over an ear
of corn

acorns pummel
the dirt

a rotting apple
attracts

a hover
of flies



*Buffalo
Bones*

*Evening Thunderstorm on the
Callahan Divide*

clouds pile
along

the eastern
horizon

like scoops
of hand

churned

vanilla bean
ice cream

Paleo-Indian Feet

once tread
this red

west Texas dirt

rolled over
these

rounded geodes
as they

packed
mammoth-boned

tents of
buffalo

hide
across

the Callahan Divide

*Josiah Walbarger, Pecan Springs,
Texas, August 1883*

he said

it felt
like thunder

ripping up
over

the curve
of his skull

then down
across

his forehead

as that Comanche
knife peeled

his scalp
from

his bone

Cirrus Clouds

fibrous and feathered
they whisk

their ice
crystals into
sunset

like tufts
of raw
silk

twirled
together

Dallas Farmer's Market

bulges with mangos
and papaya

and yellow-meated watermelon

surrounded by the florescent
froth of
pink

azaleas

bumble bees
blitz into
the

purple
perfume

of wisteria

draped
around

Rush Hour

Houston Street Bag Lady

like a
hummingbird

feeding

hollyhock to
hollyhock

she bobs
and darts

garbage can to
garbage can

down
the street

sifting
sorting

looking for aluminum

The Bag Lady's Ode

think of me
whenever you

empty a can
of Diet Coke

read Newsweek

or wipe
with toilet paper

think of me
pawing the dank depths
of Safeway's dumpster

for wilted lettuce
stale rolls
and molded cheese

I am the
grey bundle

trundling it all

along the Miracle Mile
in a Kroger cart
looking for a

safe place
to curl

the night

while you
in your creamy satin

negligee are
home

fluffing
your

down pillows

Rosetta

she was gutsy
and built like a brick outhouse
and so blonde
and she'd just had another baby
her fourth
and we were having a revival
at First Baptist
where daddy was preacher
with a visiting evangelist
a real hellfire and brimstone man
and he was preaching that night, hammer down
when she started
undoing
now I was up in the choir loft
and I could see what she was fixing to do
and I thought
Oh Lord!
but she just kept unbuttoning
and pretty soon she
sorta popped out
all over
and that old preacher was going ninety miles per
when he looked down at her
nursing that baby

on the front
row

and he had false teeth
and those teeth come
plum out of his mouth

well, he caught them
in his hand
and shoved them back in

I thought sure he was going to choke
but he just went right on
preaching

Stripping Cotton Blues

Now you listen to me real good
hear what I'm a saying

Well it was back in 1941
right after we first come out here
and I was the Crew Boss
only black boss they had

and I had me about a hundred and fifty men, good
men
brought most of them all the way from Alabama
clean to Stamford, Texas
with me

and I was buying sacks
stacks and stacks of new sacks
five hundred sacks a day
every day

hauling them out to the fields

and I worked them men
blacks and whites
Mexicans and Indians
they was all the same to me

sunup to sundown

but I was fair
done right by them men

and they done right by me
five hundred sacks a day
full of cotton

now that's a lot
of cotton

all done by hand
not nothing easy about that

but that's how we done it
back then

just a stripping cotton

Alzheimer's: What Year?

like the scarlet
flash of
cardinal
that flits
telephone line to
oak limb
the thought
paused in
my brain
but flew on
before it
reached
my lips

Cirrostratus Clouds

fluff white
across the
west Texas horizon
like a goose down
comforter
coming
unstuffed

The Buzzard Roost

every day
it looms

silver above
the west Texas plains

a crimson strobed
cell phone
tower

feathered with
the black

of turkey
vulture

settled in
at sun

down

The Fort Worth Queen of Cans

Her 1976 red
Chevy Impala
stacked roof
high
with
crumpled cans of
Coke
Dr. Pepper
Pepsi
Big Red
green beans
hominy
spinach
potatoes
tomatoes
rutabagas
sauerkraut
peas and beets
leaves precisely
enough room
behind the steering wheel
for her
stocking
capped
self
to squeeze
in

Blackstrap Molasses

juice squeezed
from fat sorghum

stalks

boiled
and condensed

becomes a
shimmered

sweetness
rippling

over blueberry
pancakes

and butter

*Sunset in the West Texas
Wild Mountains*

five dragonflies
do a square
dance

over the garden

full of tomatoes
cucumbers
zucchini
and okra
pods

in the distance
a deer
steps

from the grove
of live
oaks

lifts her head

then jumps
the fence

into the black-eyed peas

Crescent Moon in Texas

the sliver
of warm gold
rocks over
Lake Brownwood
slips into
the cedar brakes
leaving glittered
water washing
up onto limestone slabs

*Rusted Red Ford Pick-Up Truck Full
of Turkeys on Farm to Market 1178*

caged in
the bed

feathers
ruffed

by the parched wind

toe
nails

claw

for a
hold

that never
happens

Texas Grasshoppers

mile
after mile after
mile of west Texas
swarms with
orange
and black
and brown
and blue
heads
bobbing
nodding
up and
down
as each silvered
proboscis
sticks into
sandy soil
sips
oiled molasses
up through
cap rock
to separate
from salted water
to store
in empty tank batteries

The Roughneck Woes

“It’s at night
always at night
if you’re gonna
have
trouble
that’s when it’s
gonna happen
usually about three in the morning
you’re seldom disappointed
especially if
you’re
pullin’
pipe.”

Runnin' Pipe

“Now in runnin’ pipe
you got three
holes

you got the oil well itself

then you got your
rat hole

and your
mouse hole

the rat is
where you
keep your spare

pipe

the mouse is
where you
hook ‘em
up

and the well is where you put ‘em.”

Dry Hole Blues

it was a sure thing
he said

the land lay real good

gentle rolling
hills pricked
with oil
rigs

on every side

the geologist
predicted
production
in the Mississippi Lime
with an out
side
chance
in the Lower Carmichael

then they sank the six thousand foot Wilcox Test

today they drop
the cement
plug

Wisteria

lavender froth
foams from
the snaking vine

that has squeezed
into the pecan
tree trunk

in one strong constriction
that left only
dead wood

and crushing vine

corpulent
with the scent

of wisteria

Pelican

white wings
stretched

she floats
low

through the space between waves and clouds

black feathers
at her wing
tips

finger the air

hold momentarily
before she
drops

to the Gulf water below

where the fishing
looks

best

South-Going Geese

The geese are flying over
this morning

snows and blues
down from
the North

pushed out
of the Dakotas
Nebraska
Kansas
and Oklahoma
by this frigid
blast of Artic air

they've been
coming through
all morning

flocks and flocks and flocks

held low
by thick
grey clouds

loose V's
pointing

South

Real Talent

Dad had some
talent

he could stand on
his head

he would make
that perfect tripod
then slowly
precisely
raise
his legs

and there he was

all six foot two
of him
upside down
smiling

Texas Rangers Baseball

the screeching grey
haired lady

in white tennis shoes
tells them
how to
do it

a red-faced fat man
yells the strikes
before the
umpire

the tan beauty
in white shorts
can't see the plate
but doesn't complain

a pair of old men
behind home
make all
batters
swing

then chuckle to
each other

Winter Words

water splashes up

out of the crack

in the creek's

icy crust

shatters

cold quiet

like crystal

teeth

chattering

Texas Blue Norther

the barometer drops
fast

chubby grey clouds
float down
across the sky

pushed by a stiff northwest wind

then the snow
starts

a few light flakes first

then more
and more

until the air
turns to

white grosgrain

West Texas Blizzard

chived potato soup
ladled into
a hand-thrown pottery bowl

hot rye bread
on a wooden
cutting board

the drifting
scent of fresh
banana cake

the spatter of sparks
shooting out
against

the fireplace screen

a tall stack
of library books

all tucked
in

by driven
white crystals

Texas Ice Storm

fresh ice
outlines the silver
chain-link
fence

like a transparent shadow

a northeast wind
wiggles through
the scrub oak grove

limbs rub and bump

sound gritches around
like a hundred
hands

squeezing cellophane

The Orchard Spider

hangs
red and yellow
black and white
in her horizontal orb
centered
among the apples
primed for a
Med fly
to buzz
in
when he
does
she titters
over
to immobilize
then
dissolve
her meal

Remember Goliad

trapped in a waterless
depression on the Texas prairie

three hundred and forty-two men
surrendered and were marched
back to Presidio La Bahia
the old fort at Goliad

they spent part
of that March night
singing "Home Sweet Home"
believing after dawn's
white flagged
surrender

in English
and in Spanish
they would live

only to be duped
on that Palm Sunday
by General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna
the Prince of Butchers

into moving out in three divisions
wounded and dying pulled from their beds
Colonel James W. Fannin, Jr. and fellow officers
last

into the fiery flintlock finale
with any survivors sabered
then roasted in
bonfire

that only twenty-seven men escaped
by running to the river
before the Mexicans
were finished

with Fannin
and his heroic
volunteers

Texas Trawl

spiraling in a slow motion vortex

like dark
leaves trapped
in a dying
tornado

seven
buzzards weave
concentric
circles

over

the buffalo
bones

below

Biography

Sheryl is from Marysville, Kansas. She graduated from South Dakota State University with a B.S. in Family Relations and Child Development.

She has had over 4,500 poems, stories and articles published. Some of the magazines, anthologies and textbooks that have used her work are: *Reader's Digest*, *Modern Maturity*, *Kaleidoscope*, *Capper's*, *Grit*, *Country Woman*, *Poetry Now*, *Confrontation*, *Strings*, *This Delicious Day*, *The American Anthology* and *Men Freeing Men*.

Thirteen collections of her poetry have been published. Some of them are: *Their Combs Turn Red In The Spring*, *The Oketo Yahoos*, *Strawberries and Rhubarb*, *Rural America*, *Land of the Blue Paloverde*, *Friday Night Desperate*, *Aunt Emma Collected Teeth*, *Secrets of the Wind*, *Howling At the Gibbous Moon* and *Greatest Hits 1978-2003*.

She has taught writing and poetry classes at conferences, colleges and schools in Texas, Oklahoma, Arizona and South Dakota. She recently taught workshops at Amarillo College, The University of Texas at Dallas, Abilene Christian University, Tarleton State University, the Society of Children's Book Writers Conference in Arlington, Texas and at the Tarrant County College. She was a

Bread Loaf Contributor at the Bread Loaf Writer's Conference, Middlebury, Vermont.

She was Editor of *Oakwood*, the SDSU literary magazine. She was a Contributing Editor to *Byline*, a national writers' magazine and to *Streets*, a national literary magazine. She was the Editor of *Crawford's Chronicles*, an insurance trade publication. She has been a staff writer for several newspapers and magazines. She is currently the Fiction/Non-Fiction Editor of *The Pen Woman Magazine*, the national magazine of the National League of American Pen Women.

She is a member of the National League of American Pen Women, The Society of Southwestern Authors and Trinity Writers Workshop.

She makes a living as an insurance adjuster. She is also a painter, a weaver and an old dirt biker.

Publishing Credits

Bluebonnets

1. "Texas Hill Country" – *Hot Springs News and Ram*.

2. "fresh day" – *My Restless Heart, Grit, Poetry Forum, Sisters Today, Lyrics of Song, The Best Poets of 1999, PMS, Hiram Poetry Review, Nettles & Nutmeg Anthology, Lutheran Women, The Goofus Office, Audio-Visual Poetry Quarterly, Their Combs Turn Red in the Spring, and Strawberries and Rhubarb*.

3. "Altocumulus Clouds" – *Silver Wings*.

4. "Meditation" – *The Courier-Index, ...having writ..., Progressive Farmer, Sound and Waves Anthology, Kaleidoscope, Voices for Peace, Audio-Visual Poetry Quarterly, Their Combs Turn Red in the Spring, Strawberries & Rhubarb, Bitterroot, Earthwise, Lincoln Log, The Beebe News, Japanese Mail Art, Capper's, Writers Voice, Time of Singing, Integral Yoga Magazine, Pegasus, Moose Bound Press, yefief, Purpose, Wandering Anthology, and Girls Night Out Anthology*.

5. "The Pharmacist's Daughter" – *Trinity Writer's Workshop Newsletter*.

6. "Wash Day on the Farm" – *The Small Pond and Elements Magazine*.

7. "Blue Ticks Eating Asparagus" – Unpublished.

8. "Spring Soundings" – *Wings, Poetpourri, Pinchpenny, River City Sampler, Channels, Their Combs Turn Red in the Spring and Strawberries & Rhubarb*.

9. "Sunset at Eagle Mountain Lake" – *Land of the Free Anthology, Skyline Literary Magazine, and SP Quill Magazine*.

10. "breathe deep" – *If We'd Wanted Quiet, We Would Have Raised Goldfish, The Gatekeeper, The Waterways Project, Writers Voice, In My Shoes, Time of Singing, Our Bundle of Joy, Messages From Mothers To Sons, Purpose, Kaleidoscope, Silver Wings, Farm Wife News, Dialogue, Progressive Farmer, Aztec Peak, Capper's, Yesterday's Magazette, We Magazine, Feelings, Rockhurst Review, Ideals, Silver Boomers, and Victory News Journal.*

11. "Downed Hawk" – *Progressive Farmer and Audio-Visual Poetry Quarterly.*

12. "from April's palette" – *Silver Trees and Wind Songs, Purpose, Wanderlust New Mirage Quarterly, Bibliophilos, The Poet, Midwest Poetry Review, Capper's Capper's Anthology, Roanoke Review, Kaleidoscope, and Strawberries & Rhubarb.*

13. "Their Combs Turn Red in the Spring" – *Zen Tattoo, Flimsie Excuse, Earthwise, The Kindred Spirit, Dead Angel Magazine, The Maine Mail Art Exhibition, Nettled & Nutmeg Anthology, The Courier Index, Their Combs Turn Red in the Spring, and Strawberries & Rhubarb.*

14. "The Spit Bucket" – *Autocaust, Long Island Quarterly, and Best Poets & Writers in Literary Achievement.*

15. "to dust" – *Underground Rag Mag.*

16. "The Old Goodnight Ranch" – *Ruby, The Poet, Wildcat, Central Maine Morning Sentinel, Westview, The Wesleyan Advocate, Yesterday's Magazette, and Their Combs Turn Red in the Spring.*

17. "Black Birds" – *Wellspring, Audio-Visual Poetry Quarterly, Capper's, and Friends Journal.*

18. "The Fort Worth Tornado" – *Capper's.*

19. "Moment In Time" – *Aero Sun-Times, Capper's, Audio-Visual Poetry Quarterly, Lutheran Women, The Cameron Forum, and Night Roses.*

20. "killing the rooster" – *Horizons, Poetry Magazine, Embers, Japanese Mail Art, String Anthology, The Mind's Eye, Their Combs Turn Red in the Spring, Strawberries & Rhubarb, After the Storm, Oakwood, Pteranodon, Imprimatur, and Princeton Spectrum, American Poetry*

Anthology, Dancing Shadows Press, Poetry Today, Harpur Palate and Howling At the Gibbous Moon.

21. "The Spirit" – *Sunshine & Butterflies, Their Combs Turn Red in the Spring, Strawberries & Rhubarb, Integral Yoga Magazine, Pudding, The Poet, Porch Swing Rhyme, Scree, Central Maine Morning Sentinel, Westview, The Courier-Index, Sunrust and Texas Anthology.*

22. "Texas Wheat Harvest" – *Their Combs Turn Red in the Spring, Strawberries & Rhubarb, Farm Wife News, Purpose, Wanderlust Anthology, Westview, The Pawn Review, American Poetry Anthology, Audio-Visual Poetry Quarterly, The Point and We Magazine.*

23. "Outhouse Blues" – *Midwest Memories, The Music of What Happens, Nightmares of Reason, The Mind's Eye, Newsletter Inago, Manna, Capper's, The Maine Mail Art Exhibition, Writers Showcase, Winewood Women Anthology, Modern Maturity, Capper's Anthology, Westview, Art Mag, Strawberries & Rhubarb, Crystal Rainbow, The Ecophorizer, Two Twenty-Four Poetry Quarterly, Waterways, Voices, Feelings, The Funny Side of Feelings Anthology, Borderlands, Expressions, Pegasus, Fast Food Blues, Alpha Beat Press, Desktopper, The Orange Room Review and Freckles to Wrinkles.*

24. "The Car" – *Tucumcari Literary Review, Time of Singing and The Writer's Voice.*

25. "fishing for monsters" – *Newsletter Inago, America, Strawberries & Rhubarb, Westview, The New Era, Dance in the Sun, The Best New Voices in Poetry, Acorn Whistle, Central Maine Morning Sentinel, Crab Creek Review, Writers Showcase, Capper's, Audio-Visual Poetry Quarterly, Bubble Gum and Poetry, Calm Thoughts, Ideals, Victory News Journal and Atlantic Pacific Press.*

26. "Visible Echoes" – *More Big Thoughts, Kaleidoscope, Poet's Fantasy, Wilderness Blessings, The Louisiana Review, Howling At the Gibbous Moon, Their Combs Turn Red In The Spring, Sleepy Tree II, The Archer, Central Maine Morning Sentinel, The Beebe News, Capper's and Cricket.*

27. "Cumulus Clouds" – *Sisters Today, This Delicious Day, The Kindred Spirit, Writer's Info, Westview, Golden Blessings, Tales of the Old West, Poetry Now, Scree, Central Maine Morning Sentinel Capper's, The*

Courier Index, North Dakota Rec, Modern Maturity, The American Anthology, Cricket, Trail and Timberline and Wilderness Blessings.

28. "country cream" – *The New Press, Eve's Legacy, Strawberries & Rhubarb, Marriage and Family, Time of Singing, Chiron Review, Buffalo Spree Magazine, Minotaur, Capper's, Inky Trails, The Courier Index, Mill Hulk Herald, Crossing the 50 Yard Line, Poet's Fantasy, Alpha Beat Press, Silver Wings, Reflections, Westview, Over the Back Fence, Hazmat Review and Victory News Journal.*

29. "ag synthesizer" – *Into the Teeth of the Wind, Poetry Now, Westview, Capper's, Sunrust, Evangel, Strawberries & Rhubarb and Their Combs Turn Red in the Spring.*

30. "Behind Every Ranch House in Texas" – *Curbside Review, Midwest Poetry Review, Capper's, Sunrust, Westview, Angus Journal, Cornerstone, Progressive Farmer and Strawberries & Rhubarb.*

31. "4th of July" – *Silver Wings, Byline, Modern Maturity, Capper's, Psychopoetica and The Writer's Voice.*

32. "Chicken Canning Time in West Texas" – Unpublished.

33. "Blue Heron" – *Another Place to Publish, Tapjoe, Live Poets, Prophetic Voices, Capper's, Oakwood, Piedmont Literary Review, Collegian, Audio-Visual Poetry Quarterly, Lutheran Women, Ripples and The Goofus Office.*

34. "Meteorite Showers" – *Silver Wings.*

35. "Heat Waves" – *Purpose Magazine, Highway News and Good News, Candles in the Wind and Silver Wings.*

36. "Icicle Radishes" – *Night Roses, Sketches of the Soul, The Writer's Voice and America at the Millennium.*

37. "Aunt Emma Collected Teeth" – *The Village Idiot, The Western Journal of Medicine, Iowa Woman Anthology, The Ecphorizer, The Roswell Literary Review, Yet Another Small Magazine, The Artful Mind, The Black Fly Review, Incendiary Publications, Audio-Visual Poetry Quarterly, Kaleidoscope, Strawberries & Rhubarb, Tearful Soul, Creosote, Hard Row to Hoe, Dan River Anthology and Art/Life.*

38. "East Texas Root Hog" – *Gryphon, Modern Images, Delta Snake Quarterly, Famous Last Words, The Writer's Voice, The Roswell Literary Review* and *Texas Poetry Calendar 1999*.

39. "Great Cormorant" – Unpublished.

Boots

40. "Those Crows" – *Night Roses, The Advocate, Writer's Voice, Streets, Blue Unicorn, Agenda, Pinchpenny, The Beebe News, My Restless Heart, Prophetic Voices* and *Shooting Star Review*.

41. "City Life" – *Capper's, Wherever Home Begins, The Aureorean, The Backwaters Press, Measured Progress, Iowa Woman, Howling At the Gibbous Moon, Strawberries & Rhubarb, The Beebe News, Horizons, A Galaxy of Verse, Strings Anthology, ...having writ... and The Poets Perspective*.

42. "Real Cowboy" – *Gryphon*.

43. "Bull Fighter" – *Reflect, The Texas Anthology* and *For Folks with Their Boots On*.

44. "Rodeo Circuit Cowboy" – *Nexus*.

45. "The Brazos River" – *Their Combs Turn Red in the Spring, Strawberries & Rhubarb, Oregon, Princeton Spectrum, Vanderbilt Review, America, Audio-Visual Poetry Quarterly* and *Late Knocking Poe Anthology*.

46. "Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Female" – *Audio-Visual Poetry Quarterly, Anthology of the Best Poems of 1988, Bluestem News, Poet's Fantasy, Hard Row to Hoe, Abbey, Blackbird, Hyperion, Pasque Petals, A Galaxy of Verse, The Beebe News, Calli's Tales, Love Letters* and *Waterways*.

47. "Grandma's Gypsies" – *Their Combs Turn Red in the Spring, Strawberries & Rhubarb, Kaleidoscope, The Ecphorizer, In My Shoes*,

America, *Blindskills*, *Fresh Tracks*, *Princeton Spectrum*, *The Kindred Spirit*, *The Maine Mail Art Exhibition*, *Writers Showcase*, *Capper's* and *Tales of the Old West*.

48. "Grandma's Sunbonnet Quilt" – *December Rose*, *The Beatrice Sun*, *Array Magazine*, *The Waterways Project*, *The Ecphorizer*, *So Young*, *Aim*, *Cer*Ber*Us*, *Up Against the Wall Mother*, *Crystal Rainbow* and *Tales of the Old West*.

49. "old lady Wilson" – *beginnings*.

50. "West Texas Wheat Farmer With Early Alzheimer's" – Unpublished.

51. "Salting Down" – *New Words Unlimited Anthology*, *Hard Row to Hoe*, *Ambergris*, *The Higginsville Reader*, *Ellipsis*, *The American Aesthetic*, *Window Panes*, *Poetic Eloquence*, *Curbside Review*, *Aldebaran*, *Soundings East*, *Dark Starr*, *Crazy Quilt*, *Men's Issues Anthology* and *T.R.'S Zine*.

52. "Picking Granny Smith Apples in West Texas" – *TWW News & Showcase Newsletter*.

53. "West Texas Halloween" – *Anthology Who's Who of 2008* and *Wanderlust Anthology*.

54. "Gutting A Diamondback Rattlesnake" – Unpublished.

55. "horned toad" – *Their Combs Turn Red in the Spring*, *Strawberries & Rhubarb*, *The Courier-Index*, *Ursus Press Anthology*, *Great Lakes Fireside Reader*, *Capper's*, *The Kindred Spirit*, *The Muse Letter*, *Hieroglyphics Press Anthology*, *Abraxas*, *Cumberlands*, *Bury Me Sioux*, *Poetry Flash*, *An Old Wag's Tale*, *Japanese Mail Art*, *The Courier-Index*, *Today's Prairie Woman*, *Kids Say "Oh Billy" Magazine*, *Skywriters*, *The Gentle Survivalist*, *Poet's Fantasy*, *Bibliophilos*, *Skyline Literary Magazine*, *Musings* and *Dan River Anthology 2004*.

56. "Frog" – *Poetry Press*, *Creative Graphics*, *Central Maine Morning Sentinel*, *Capper's*, *Poet's Fantasy* and *Atlantic Pacific Press*.

57. "it's raining in Texas" – *Nit and Wit*, *Hot Spring News*, *Late Knocking Poe Anthology*, *Bibliophilos* and *Strawberries & Rhubarb*.

58. "Indian Summer in Bowie, Texas" – *New Texas 2003, Bibliophilos, Clackamas Literary Review, Voices of a Nation, Timber Creek Review, Silver Wings, Poetalk and Time of Singing.*

59. "Parker County Texas Fall" – *Soft Whispers II.*

60. "Dragon Fly Wing" – *Their Combs Turn Red in the Spring, Strawberries & Rhubarb, Crystal Rainbow, The 100 Best Poems of Beauty, Faith & Inspiration Anthology, Bluestem News, Poetry Depth Quarterly, Poet's Fantasy, Oregon, Hazmat Review, Atlantic Pacific Press, Green River Review, The Honey Creek Anthology, Love Letters, The Courier Index and Z Miscellaneous.*

Buffalo Bones

61. "Evening Thunderstorm on the Callahan Divide" – *Lone Stars Magazine and Trinity Writers Workshop Newsletter.*

62. "Paleo-Indian Feet" – *Confrontation and Fat Tuesday.*

63. "Josiah Walbarger, Pecan Springs, Texas, August 1883" – *Feelings.*

64. "Cirrus Clouds" – *Writer's Journal, Welcome Home, Crazed Nation, Art Mag, Lone Star Magazine and Bay Windows.*

65. "Dallas Farmer's Market" – *Chronogram Magazine and Writings of the Ages.*

66. "Houston Street Bag Lady" – *Cries on the Wind, Poetry of the People, Onionhead, Aim and Words of Wisdom.*

67. "The Bag Lady's Ode" – *Golden Apple Press, First Northwoods Anthology, The Awakenings Review, Kaleidoscope, Publishers Choice: Selected Poets of The New Era, Lactuca, Silver Wings, Feelings, Poetry of the People and Earth's Daughters.*

68. "Rosetta" – *Howling At the Gibbous Moon, Gryphon, Soundings East, The Pub and Fox Cry.*

69. "Stripping Cotton Blues" – *Felicity, Kaleidoscope and Riversedge.*

70. "Alzheimer's: What Year?" – *Survivors Share Their Success Stories, STET, Words of Wisdom, The Hearthside Reader, Backwoods Home Magazine, Sidewalks, Anthology, Time of Singing, Candlestones, Feelings, Infinity, Audio-Visual Poetry Quarterly, Opossum Holler Tarot, Sisphys Poetry Quarterly, Art Times, Alzheimer's Association Anthology, Star Line, The Unforgettable Fire, Sisters Today, Mother's Underground Magazine, The Waterways Project, Manna, The Garden of Life, Hob-Nob, Writer's Voice, Echoes, Ibis Books, Challenges, Pandaloon, The Awakenings Review, The Storyteller, Time of Singing, First Northwoods Anthology and The Rockhurst Review.*

71. "Cirrostratus Clouds" – Unpublished.

72. "The Buzzard Roost" – *Call It 2008 Anthology.*

73. "The Fort Worth Queen of Cans" – *Offerings and Verse Libre Quarterly.*

74. "Blackstrap Molasses" – Unpublished.

75. "Sunset in the West Texas Wild Mountains" – Unpublished.

76. "Crescent Moon in Texas" – Unpublished.

77. "Rusted Red Ford Pick-Up Truck Full of Turkeys on Farm to Market 1178" – Unpublished.

78. "Texas Grasshoppers" – *The End of the Age of Oil Anthology, The Southern Standard and ALURA.*

79. "The Roughneck Woes" – *Westview.*

80. "Runnin' Pipe" – *Westview, Texas Anthology and Smellfest Magazine.*

81. "Dry Hole Blues" – *Westview.*

82. "Wisteria" – *Colonnades, Capper's, Oregon, Angels Embrace Our Hearts and Dan River Anthology 2002.*

83. "Pelican" – *Nexus, Audio-Visual Poetry Quarterly, Who's Who in Modern Literature 1998, Prophetic Voices and Out of Our Minds.*

84. "South-Going Geese" – *Pivot Sharing, Audio-Visual Poetry Quarterly, Capper's, Silver Wings, Cricket Magazine and Mayflower Garden Log.*

85. "Real Talent" – *New American Poets, On the Threshold of a Dream, Time of Singing, Tidings to a Tick, The Village Idiot, Voices, English as a Second Language, Sagebrush Scholar, John Milton Society for the Blind, Buffalo Spree Magazine, Hope Tracks, The Kindred Spirit, Poetry Flash, Capper's, This Delicious Day, Celebrations of Life, Cricket Magazine, The Poetry Mission, Sink Full of Dishes, The Roswell Literary Review, Cer*Ber*Us XXXII, Heavenly Words, Silver Boomers and Atlantic Pacific Press.*

86. "Texas Rangers Baseball" – *Cricket Magazine, Fan Magazine, Flimsie Excuse, Poet's Fantasy, Green's Magazine, Dark Horse, Spitball, Anthology, Spitball Anthology of the Best, Audio-Visual Poetry Quarterly and Nite Writer's.*

87. "Winter Words" – *The Christian Science Monitor and Cricket Magazine.*

88. "Texas Blue Norther" – *Alabaster Pathways, Saint James Press, Time of Singing, Golden Apple Press, Botique, Wellspring, The Beebe News, Lucky Jim's Saloon, America, Angus Journal, Not Your Average Zine and Endless Sky An Anthology of Air and Space Poems.*

89. "West Texas Blizzard" – *Angus Journal, Paisano, Capper's, Time of Singing, Capper's Cookbook, Writer's Voice, Cricket Magazine, Silver Wings, Cattails & Meadowlarks, Their Combs Turn Red in the Spring, College Poetry Review, Cricket Magazine, Silver Wings, Cattails & Meadowlarks, Their Combs Turn Red in the Spring, College Poetry Review, Pegasus, Active Aging, The Pegasus Review, Audio-Visual Poetry Quarterly, A Trinity Writer's Workshop 2006 Christmas Anthology, Creative with Words and TWW Newsletter.*

90. "Texas Ice Storm" – *Capper's, Sisters Today, Poetry of the People, Voices Poetry Magazine, The Christian Science Monitor, Seasons Anthology, The Writer's Voice, Poet & Critic, Strawberries & Rhubarb,*

Pauses In Time, The New Press, Voices for Peace, Newsletter Inago, The New Era, Wanderlust Anthology and TWW Christmas 2006 Anthology.

91. "The Orchard Spider" – Unpublished

91. "Remember Goliad" – Unpublished.

92. "Texas Trawl" – *Inside Joke, Blue Horse and Strawberries & Rhubarb.*

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