

Freckles to Wrinkles

a Silver Boomer Book

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Some selections in Freckles to Wrinkles have been published previously.

“Afternoon at Grandfather’s House” – *Artella web site* ~§~ “Guard Duty” – *Chicken Soup for the Horse Lover’s Soul* ~§~ “The Gate” – *Streetlight* ~§~ “Nearing Menopause, I Run into Elvis at Shoprite” – *Karamu* (Word Press), *Grow Old Along with Me* (Papier-Mache Press) ~§~ “The Fifties” – *Rattle, Radiance* (Word Press) ~§~ “Creamed Spinach” – *Echolocation* ~§~ “Ballet Class” – *Coffee Break Poetry* (www.cafepress.com) ~§~ “Spring Fever” – *Imprint: Enlightening, thought-provoking and uplifting poetry* ~§~ “Expect Joy, Expect Blessings” – www.boomerwomenspeak.com (July 2007), excerpts *The Hip Grandma’s Handbook* ~§~ “Gumming of Age” – another version published by *flashquake* ~§~ “Killing a Frog” – *Plum Ruby Review* (December 2003/January 2004), *Contemporary American Voices* (August 2007) ~§~ “Wild Sugar” – *Acorn* (Universities West Press Anthology) ~§~ “Red Tide” – small literary journal *Skyline Magazine* (June-August, 2007) ~§~ “Tip Boxes” – *Coe Review* (Vol. 37, No. 1, Fall 2006) ~§~ “Carol Lee Turns 60...” – *Erato* (February 25, 2005) ~§~ “Meet Frankenstein” – *poetrymagazine.com* and *Greatest Hits: 1975-2000*, James Penha (Pudding House) ~§~ “Four on a Fold” – *Brother* (Action Press, 1996), and *Boomer Girls: Poems by Women from the Baby Boom Generation* (University of Iowa Press) ~§~ An earlier version of “Education” – *When I Was a Child: A Poetic Collection of Childhood Impressions* (PoetWorks Press, 2003) ~§~ “Bridging a Woman’s Life” *Houston Poetry Fest Anthology 2005* ~§~ “Bloodlines” – *Capper’s Magazine* (October 2000) ~§~ “Connie Sue’s Concerns” – *North of New Orleans* (Summer 2004) ~§~ “Expect Blessings; Expect Joy” *Boomer Women Speak web site* ~§~ “Graying in my Life” – *The Lost American: From Exile to Freedom*

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Dedication

*This volume is dedicated
to every freckled day
of our past
and every wrinkle
in our time.*

Ginny Greene

Becky Haigler

Kerin Riley-Bishop

Barbara B. Rollins



The Silver Boomer Books

Silver Boomers

a collection of prose and poetry

by and about Baby Boomers

March, 2008

Freckles to Wrinkles

July, 2008

This Path

Fall, 2008

"It is never too late to have a happy childhood." Tom Robbins ~§~

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freckles and doubt." Dorothy Parker ~S~ "Genius is childhood

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recaptured." Jean Baudrillard ~S~ "A graceful and honorable old age

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There was this freckle, and it got bigger and bigger." Bill Cosby ~\$~

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"Childhood is a disease - a sickness that you grow out of." William

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Golding ~§~ "Wrinkles are hereditary. Parents get them from their

From Freckles...

Barbara B. Rollins



children.” Doris Day ~§~ “Age does not bring you wisdom, age brings

Soundtrack

Barbara B. Rollins

Mary had a little lamb
my name is Sam, Sam I am
hippity hop, hippity hop
here I come, ready or not

push 'em back, push 'em back
yackity yack, don't talk back
he loves me yes, he loves me not
he said he'd call, but he forgot

a hundred bottles of beer on the wall
yes, Mom, I know, I meant to call
grades are out, I got a C
next week we're playing Tennessee

here comes the bride
hand in hand and side by side
hush little baby, don't you cry
mommy's got to go now, kiss me 'bye

wash your hands and comb that hair
the hundredth time, we're almost there
don't jerk the wheel – slow – whoa
have you settled yet on where to go

you wrinkles.” Estelle Getty ~§~ “Wrinkles will only go where the

this house just echoes it's so quiet
I'm playing bridge next Thursday night
don't forget the passports, Dear
I told you that! You just don't hear

grow old with me, the best is yet
Dad's laugh and hugs we won't forget
I shall wear purple, red hats, too
yes, Sweetie, Grams kiss your booboo

the thing that flies, yes, a plane
where did I put my walking cane
I didn't hear a thing she said
I don't hear much outside my head

I thought I'd teach the world to sing
but now I mess up everything
when words and names I know won't come
then in my head the whole earth hums

smiles have been." Jimmy Buffett ~§~ "Let age, not envy, draw

Riding Into Time

Lisa Timpf

He was brown, with a black mane and tail and white socks. If he had a name, I don't remember it.

I saw him whenever I accompanied my parents to the grocery store in town. Depositing a dime into the coin slot would bring him to life, this mechanical horse, and for a few handfuls of seconds, the lucky child for whom that ride had been purchased would sit on the saddle, feet firmly planted in the western-style stirrups, eyes closed to block out the store and the shoppers, the better to visualize the open range or some similar fantasy setting.

As a youngster, I didn't have a plentiful supply of coins of any description. And so my opportunity to taste the magic of the mechanical horse was at the whim of my father.

I knew better than to ask. My dad usually refused selfish requests. Non-verbal communication, however, was fair game. And so, I would slow down just a bit and give the horse a lingering look as we walked past – for the horse was strategically positioned in such a way that every outgoing shopper had no choice but to walk by him.

And sometimes Dad would ask, "Would you like a ride?" and I would scramble up on the horse's back, quick, before he could change his mind, and sit there, gripping the reins tightly, waiting for the horse to lunge to life.

And other times, the majority of times, we just walked past.

wrinkles on thy cheeks." Thomas Browne ~\$~ "When you finally go

Now, I don't mean to sound as if my dad was cheap, or mean, for he was not. Though I was oblivious to it at the time, I realize now that by the time the bills were paid, my father didn't have a whole lot more disposable cash than I did. A few seconds' worth of riding on a mechanical horse provided no benefit beyond a soon-vanished pleasure, and would have seemed an immense extravagance, a waste of hard-earned money. And so I have some appreciation, now, of the inner struggle he must have experienced as he looked at my face, and the horse, as we headed out of the store with a cartload of carefully selected groceries.

My father died a few years back, and the mechanical horse and his cousins are long gone from the grocery stores in our parts. Yet I can clearly remember those few treasured rides – made the more pleasurable by the times we walked past. For my father may have known this as well: a thing is sometimes made more precious not because we do it all the time, but because we do not.

Four on a Fold

Paula Sergi

Some summer nights in the early sixties
in the middle of the country,
no ocean for thousands of miles
in either direction,
the air was everywhere heavy
like grandma's mothballed wool quilt,

back to your old hometown, you find it wasn't the old home you missed

Freckles to Wrinkles

17

navy as night
covering our faces, holding us down.
We should've been tired from play —
four square, seven steps around the house,
hopscotch drawn from the sharp side of a stone
on squares of concrete that marked
the edge of our front lawn.
Those nights we could stay up till nine,
but even after sunset no air moved.
We'd try to sleep
in the ten by twelve family room,
windows on three sides,
as if the screens themselves
would make a breeze.
Four on a fold-down couch
in short polyester pajamas
that stuck to our backs
waiting for sleep,
for a breeze, for a father
who never came back to say good-bye.
I worried maybe we'd all suffocate
before dawn, but we all grew up
one way or another
before we realized
how little air we'd had.

but your childhood" Sam Ewing ~§~ "A face without freckles is like a

Charley Plays a Tune

Michael Lee Johnson

Crippled with arthritis
in a dark rented room
Charley plays
melancholic melodie
on a dust-filled
harmonica he
found abandoned
on a playground of sand
years ago by a handful of children
playing on monkey bars.
He now goes to the bathroom on occasion,
peeing takes forever; he feeds the cat,
Melody, when he buys fish at the local market
and the skeleton bones of the fish show through.
He lies on his back riddled with pain,
pine cones fill his pillows and mattress;
praying to Jesus and rubbing his rosary beads
Charley blows tunes out his
celestial instrument
notes float through the open window
touch the nose of summer clouds.
Charley overtakes himself with grief
and is ecstatically alone.
Charley plays a solo tune.

sky without stars." Natasha Bedingfield & Tobias Gad ~§~ "When

Unbreakable

Juleigh Howard-Hobson

It is 1969. I am six. I am in my grandmother's kitchen. My grandmother loves beautiful things. She has them everywhere, but especially here, in her favorite room in her house.

Her pots have colors on the outside. She has a pink one, a green one, a great big orange one. One pot is white, bright white, with a line of red on the rim of it and on the handle, too. Her mixing bowls make a rainbow when you line them up.

She has fancy dishes up in the cupboard but her everyday dishes are more wonderful. They are Melmac – real Melmac – and she has green, yellow, red, blue, pink, and fleck grey. Some are the color of the inside of a cantaloupe. When you put the different colored ones all on top of each other, cup, bowl, sandwich dish, supper dish, they look like candy towers.

She says when she dies she will leave all of them to me in her will.

My mother says good, I don't want them that's for sure.

I smile.

I sip strawberry milk from a lime green cup that I put on a butter yellow saucer. My tuna-fish sandwich, cut in four squares, is on a plate that is the same color of the sky. These are my favorites.

Carefully I replace the cup to the saucer when I am done. Carefully I pile them up, cup and saucer, like Necco wafers, on the blue dish. Carefully I carry them to the sink.

childhood dies, its corpses are called adults." Brian W. Aldiss ~§~

Even though they are my grandmother's Melmac dishes,
now they are mine, too.

My grandmother smiles as we wash them, together.

Ballet in the Piney Woods

Glenda Beall

Little girl sunsuits littered the wiregrass.
Summer warmed small bronze bodies
that danced on the stage of a fallen oak,
to songbirds' music from the mayhaw.

They felt, at five, the kiss of butterflies
upon their eyes, breathed honeysuckle air.
Like sylphs set free they twirled, arms open,
gathering the breeze against their bareness.

Chastised for their boldness by older girls
who barged into their glade,
the innocents saw themselves
and were ashamed.

"Wear a smile and have friends; wear a scowl and have wrinkles."

Ramblings of a Long Since Ex-Paper Boy

Larry Lefkowitz

Some decades have passed since I was a paper boy. Or a boy who delivered papers, as a “paper boy” seemed to put me in the same class as paper airplanes and paper boats. Of the latter two categories, paper airplanes would have been closer to the mark. For I would throw the papers from my bicycle in the hoped-for direction of the front door in hoped-for emulation of a plane coming in for a landing. Unfortunately, my mastery of aerodynamics was not good. The paper usually planed off or veered off or flew off in other directions, landing on – or even in – hedges, gardens, various other sites which would have made nice places to read them. But my customers, for some reason, preferred to receive their papers on their front door stoops.

Perhaps they would have been mollified if the papers arriving at various points on their frontal property had remained crisply folded. If I was a poor thrower, I was a worse folder. The papers often flew open in mid-flight, which made a pretty sight to me but a disturbing one to my customers. They apparently preferred to open the paper themselves instead of having it already opened for them. Or perhaps they rued having to reconstruct the paper so that each page followed the previous in numbered order. It would have been far easier to read

George Eliot ~§~ “I don’t want my wrinkles taken away - I don’t want

whatever page ended up first, but try to teach an old reader new tricks....

If memory serves me right, the favored paper fold in those days was not the simple folding in of the sides to make a cylinder, but a more complicated folding into a square. I did not excel at this fold. It was a fold designed for controlled flight. In my case, the paper flew more in the manner of a kite than a missile.

Still, my customers stayed with me. Pity on their part, or personality on my part, or maybe something I touched within them, manifesting the less than perfect in life, struck a chord.

Surely, in the not far future, electronic delivery to a screen will make the paper boy obsolete. The sight and sound of a paper flying through the air and landing with a pleasant whack will disappear from American life. The feel of a newspaper, the odor of a newspaper, will go also. Progress, they will call it. If I'm still around, I won't.

I Find

TJ Coles

I find that I, as time goes by,
Sometimes forget the what and the why.
I sit by myself doing whatever I do.
Reading a book or polishing a shoe.

When suddenly something jumps in my mind.
I must go, I must run, I must seek and then find.

to look like everyone else." Jane Fonda ~§~ "The childhood shows the

I rise from my place and proceed with due haste,
Certain of my duty and sure of my pace.

I arrive when I get there all ready to go.
But whatever I came for, I no longer know.
The impulse is there, there was something I sought.
But now, it seems I can't remember just what.

There is something I need. I'm sure of it now.
It'll come back to me, someday or somehow.
I wait and I pace like a cat in a cage.
The answer won't come, the mind won't engage.

I finally give up and go back to my shoe.
Who knows what I thought I wanted to do.
It's only when the chair finally hits my behind
That I remember once more what I wanted to find.

I jump up again and go back where I looked
Only to find that once more I've been rooked.
What ever it was that I wanted to find
Must somehow connect with my chair and behind.

It's my memory you see, it comes and it goes.
Sometimes it ebbs and sometimes it flows.
There's no point in throwing a hissy fit.
It only comes back in my chair, when I sit.

I think if just maybe I wrote it all down
It might just stay long enough to be found.
So I'll just go get some paper and pen...
Now tell me, what was I here for again?

man, As morning shows the day." John Milton ~§~ "If wrinkles must

The Fifties

Barbara Crooker

We spent those stifling, endless, summer afternoons
on hot front porches, cutting paper dolls from Sears
catalogs, making up our own ideal families
complete with large appliances
and an all-occasion wardrobe with fold-down
paper tabs.

Sometimes we left crayons on the cement
landing, just to watch them melt.

We followed the shade around the house.

Time was a jarful of pennies, too hot
to spend, stretching long and sticky,
a brick of Bonomo's Turkish Taffy.

Tomorrow'd be more of the same,
ending with softball or kickball,
then hide and seek in the mosquitoey dark.

Fireflies, like connect-the-dots or find-the-hidden-
words, rose and glowed, winked on and off,
their cool fires coded signals
of longing and love
that we would one day
learn to speak.

be written upon our brows, let them not be written upon the heart.

Mud Puddle Frolics

Betty Jo Goddard

It was May and school was still in session when the weather turned hot. Graciously, it chose Friday night for a storm. Dark, looming clouds rolled in from the west, thunder boomed, lightning crackled, and wind raged. Rain pelted our roof, filling our rain barrel in no time and dripping through our ceiling into the waiting pots below.

If Windsor's streets had storm gutters, there were none near our house. Water filled ditches and lapped across the road. As soon as we kids got up, we looked through mom's lace curtains and saw water lapping across Virginia Avenue. We bolted down our oatmeal and started in on Mom.

"Mom, can we go out wading?"

She raised her eyebrows. "Can? I think you're all able to wade, but you don't have permission to."

"May," we chorused. "May. May we at least go barefoot?"

You'd think, with all this bleating, that going barefoot was the greatest thing in the world, but I didn't really like going barefoot all that much. The rocks hurt my feet, I couldn't run as fast, and I didn't like getting my feet dirty. Despite this, that huge puddle drew me like a bee to honey.

"Can we? May we? May we, please, pretty please?"

Possibly to relieve her ears, Mom caved in. "Oh, all right, then. But you be sure to wash your feet when you come in. I'll put a bucket by the rain barrel."

The spirit should never grow old." James A. Garfield ~S~ "I like the

We kids shucked off our shoes and headed for that mud puddle, slamming the screen door behind us. Muddy water rose over my ankles and up my legs. Delicious. I pushed my shins against the water, swirling it in waves up to my knees, enjoying cool streams rolling down my calf. A fly landed on my arm, tickling it. I brushed it away with a watery hand as I churned toward Jim.

Just as I came alongside him, Jim stomped. Water splashed over my thighs, wetting the hem of my dress.

“Oh, ho. Too bad for you, Jim!” Bent on retaliation, I clenched my teeth, stuck out my chin, and, with determined vigor, matched Jim stomp for stomp. Then I turned and churned through the water away from my foe. At the end of the puddle, I eyed Jim as he headed toward me, his pant legs rolled up above his knees. Not to be cowed, I waded toward the center of the pool. Jim feinted, then stomped hard, sending a giant spray over my front. I circled to Jim’s left side where the water was deepest and thrust my foot down. A gratifying geyser of muddy water splashed clear up to Jim’s face. Laughing, I waded off with Jim plunging after me.

“All right for you,” Jim said. When he reached me, he jumped high and landed with both feet, dousing me. Water dripped from my chin, from my nose, from my eyebrows. This was war.

Jim and I stomped in earnest. Splashes flew. We lurched backwards, arms reeling from “accidental” shoves. Jim’s rolled up pants were drenched; my fresh print dress dripped.

Mary Lena, our little sister, liked the splashing game. Heedless of her sun suit, she stooped down, cupped her hands, and threw water to the skies. Laughing, John mimicked Jim and me. Stamping his chubby legs, he happily splattered. Tom, who barely knew how to walk, toddled toward the water and sat right

idea of growing old gracefully and full of wrinkles... like Audrey

down in it. It wasn't long before all of us had a lot more than our feet wet.

Since our clothes were already wet, why couldn't we? Leaving Tom behind, Jim, John, Mary Lena, and I dashed inside and petitioned Mom. "See, we on accident got a little bit wet, so please, can we sit down in the water and get all the way wet? Please, pretty please, can we? May we?"

Mom suffered our shrill pleas while she surveyed our spattered clothes. Assent was the path of least resistance. Exasperated, she said, "Oh, all right. Go ahead."

Banging the screen door, we thundered out and headed for the mud puddles. Now real splashing began. With great arm thrusts, Jim and I splashed each other, showering water in a veritable deluge. Reveling in the sensuous feeling of getting wet all over, I jumped up and landed, splat, on my seat, showering Jim with a giant spray of water and mud. Going barefoot wasn't half bad when we could do this.

After we had our fill of puddle splashing, Mom took her washtub to the back yard and, bucketful after bucketful, filled it with water from the rain barrel. "Now you kids get in there and rinse all the mud off before you come into the house. Every bit of it. Betty Jo, you help the little ones. Get the mud out of their hair, too."

So, as the May sun beat hot on our shoulders and rainwater splashed cool on our arms, we kids enjoyed more frolicking in our backyard washtub pool. Altogether, the morning was wonderful fun, and we were out of Mom's hair for an hour or two. Back in the 1930's, none of us – not even Mom and Dad – had dreamed of television or computer games. But we didn't need that stuff, even if we'd known about it. A good night's rainstorm provided us with a whole Saturday morning of rowdy entertainment.

Hepburn." Natalie Imbruglia ~§~ "That great Cathedral space which

Bloodlines

Becky Haigler

Three figures stand against a soddy
in the Oklahoma dustbowl, as if awaiting
execution or reprieve. In the foreground
Henry Ford's machine is clearly
the occasion for the picture.

"Uncle Brad's Model A," said a grown-up.
I didn't care for the car. I stared at the woman:
tall and bony, sad eyes in wire-rimmed glasses,
mouth drooping under a long nose,
hair not captured by the shapeless hat.

"Uncle Brad, Aunt Emma and Grandma."
"...the soddy Grandma lived in
when she came to Indian Territory."
"Emma never was a pretty girl."
Comments followed the picture 'round the table.

"It's me!" I claimed what others were too polite to say,
but I knew. Two generations and a side-step ago —
my father's father's sister had my face. No matter
that she was ugly, that we were ugly. Instead,
a sense of belonging, being connected, to Emma's face.

was childhood." Virginia Woolf ~§~ "I'm more relaxed about life now

A Cowboy and His Horse

TJ Coles

Horses were very important to me when I was a kid, because of my decision to become a cowboy. It's a well-known fact that any cowboy worthy of the name has to have a horse. This was difficult because we lived in the city most of the time. The only time I had a chance to ride was when we were visiting my Grandmother's ranch. Even then, the only horse I was allowed to ride was Snowfire.

Don't let the name fool you. Snowfire had a white coat, that's where the snow part of her name came from. Her fire however had long since gone out. She was very nearly as wide as she was long. She was so big that when I sat on her I was almost doing the splits. Two small kids riding bareback could sit side by side without fear of falling off. She was mild mannered and gentle – you could put a little kid up on her back and have no fear that she would buck him off no matter what the kid did. She was also so slow you could leave the kid on her for an hour and they would both still be within sight of the house.

Snowfire and I spent many wonderful hours together. I would be riding along staring meaningfully at the horizon on my way to save the ranch from the Indians or rustlers or flood, fire, disaster or whatever. Snowfire would be meandering along nibbling on anything that looked interesting along the way. If things got too boring, I could just stretch out on her back and take a nap.

that I'm older. I like it - despite the wrinkles. It's what I feel inside

Those were good times, but perhaps not as exciting as they might have been. One day I decided it was time for a real adventure. I'd ride over the mountain and down to Piney Creek. There could be rustlers or stampeding cattle along the way; even if there weren't, at least I'd be out of sight of the house.

I would take my BB gun along for protection and maybe shoot a grouse for the supper pot. I had never actually shot a grouse but I was ever hopeful. The trip was a little over two miles. Taking into account Snowfire's best pace, I figured it would take us all day, so I packed a lunch.

Because this was an adventure, I put a saddle and bridle on Snowfire. Once everything was lashed down or otherwise securely tied, I grabbed the reins and swung into the saddle and we lit shuck out of there swinging high and wide. That is to say, by hammering my heels repeatedly into her sides I managed to get Snowfire up to the blistering pace of maybe three or four miles per hour and headed more or less in the right direction.

The next hours were pure high adventure hampered only by Snowfire's propensity for sampling every stray outcropping of vegetation that she came across, making our actual progress approximately that of an anemic snail. We finally reached the top of the pass about noon. Because we were making such good time, I decided to eat lunch in the saddle. Snowfire didn't need a break to eat because she had been eating more or less continuously since we started.

We finally made it to Piney Creek about six in the evening and stopped just long enough for Snowfire to drink her fill, then turned around and headed back. Based on our progress up to that point, I figured we'd get back to the house in time for breakfast. But once she realized that we were headed back toward the barn, her whole attitude changed. It was like riding on a new horse.

that's precious." Melanie Griffith ~§~ "Jewelry takes people's minds off
