



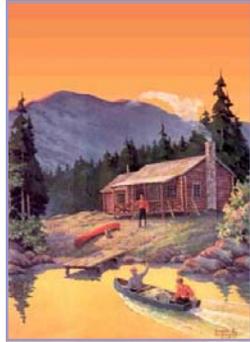
Voices

Beginner's Luck

© Sarah Malone, Storyteller

My father is not an outdoor kind of guy. Those who know him well would probably say *that* is the understatement of the year. My father, for example, never accompanied the other Minnesota men, including his own brother, on their annual hunting trip in October when the weather turned crisp. Much later, I put two and two together and realized that my siblings and I were all most personally indebted to my Dad and his annual choice to stay home. It turns out that of six children, five of us celebrate our birthdays during the same two week period in mid-summer. Seems like he had more important things to do than go hunting in October!

Later, when two of my brothers became Eagle Scouts, they did so pretty much without my dad's direct involvement. Once my mother, overcome by a rush of Irish humiliation at having to explain to the Scoutmaster, yet again, why Dad would be unable to attend the mandatory camping trip, convinced my dad to go. Well, *convinced* is too mild a word; *bribed* would be more accurate. Mom bought him two nice, juicy T-bone steaks as a lure, thinking they would last him both nights of the dreaded ordeal. Much was her astonishment when my father crawled back into bed at home around midnight of the first night out. Apparently,



he had eaten his own steak and shared the second with the other men who agreed to stay the course — as compensation, perhaps, for his early bailout.

Well, I must admit I take after my father a bit. I never had much interest in outdoor sports and such, either. But once, when I was a kid, I got it in my head that I wanted to learn to fish. Since Dad was not a resource in this regard, I turned to Uncle Dick.

Uncle Dick and Auntie Jean (my dad's sister), had a wonderful, log cabin nestled in the woods of Northern Wisconsin. It had a musty, log smell, complete with fireplace, bunk beds, brown-and-yellow plaid ceramic dishes, and a picture window looking down on the lake. Uncle Dick was an expert fisherman. I was sure of this because he had a mess of fishing poles and two boats, tied to his very own dock.

Uncle Dick was the only one my mother ever allowed to call us by anything other than our given names. Well, the *girls'* names that is. He always called my brothers as they had been baptized, John, Michael, and Bill. But he renamed us girls. He named my older sister, Mary Clare, "Big Susie." When I came along, he named me "Little Susie." I thought this was all right until my sister, Trish, was born. Darned if he didn't name *her* Little Susie, too. Living in a big family, you get used to sharing things —

A Late Walk

© Sonja Britton



Long shadows of evening
caress tall emerald grasses.

Fence posts run together
as another day passes.

I hear sounds of life
swiftly rushing by me.
Wonder what the future
will offer or deny me?

A lovely stand of mallow
waves gently in the breezes,
and a cocky old crow
rides the wind as he pleases.
The sun is sewing golden lace
'round a dark blue evening cloud
as I walk here in this beauty,
say my thoughts again... out loud.

Now I can smell the rain
as it falls upon my neighbor.
No more thoughts about tomorrow,
it's this day that I must savor.

In this issue:

The Minnow Catcher by Lee Prosser
I Met Todd Today by Ed Jacobson
Gavilan Walk by Hillevi Ruumet
Youngstown by Alice Spencer
I Remember by Ross H. Spencer
The Leave Taking by Ric Giardina
Within Me by Beverly Addante
The Misty Portal by Bob Mason

2	Heroes by Julia Marie Simons	6
3	Guilty by Stephanie Oniones	7
3	Good Bye and Good Bye by Dorothy May	7
4	Sweetwater Creek Remembrances by Lee Prosser	7
4	Where Was I? by C. Schaefer Manette	8
5	Choices by C. Schaefer Manette	8
5	My Valley by Sonja Britton	8
6	Connection by Dorothy May	8

Beginner's Luck

(continued from page 1)

hand-me-down clothes, toys, and even birthday parties. But sharing my new name seemed a bit much, though I never did complain.

Well, anyway, I went to Uncle Dick and asked him to take us fishing. He said sure, if we three Susies would first dig up a bucketful of worms. Uncle Dick had a big trough-like container on a bluff overlooking the lake filled with dirt *and* worms. This we did, with plenty of squeals and trauma, the night before. Then, before dawn the next morning, Uncle Dick woke us up and ushered us down to the dock and into the fishing boat. We were warned to stay quiet, or we'd scare away the sunfish... the golden finned swimmers that can only be caught at dawn — or so he said — in those northern waters.

Pretty soon, we'd rowed out to the middle of the lake, laced our hooks with squirmy brown worms, and raised our poles out over the water. Little round red and white plastic bobbins floated hopefully on the dark surface, and Uncle Dick let us know that a dip in the bobbin would mean we had a bite. No sooner had he spoken than my round red and white bobbin bobbed. "I got a bite, I got a bite!" I whispered excitedly. Uncle Dick didn't think so... not so soon. But sure enough, I reeled in the *first* catch of the day. A shimmering, shiny sunfish!

"Beginner's luck," I heard him mumble. Before long, my bobbin bobbed again, and then again, and again. After I'd reeled in several fish, Uncle Dick suggested we switch places. Carefully, we each stood up, and did a balancing act to change sides without upsetting the small boat.

Well, darned if the same thing didn't happen when I got to the place Uncle Dick had just vacated. I think the other Little Susie may have caught one fish, and Uncle Dick another. But nothing could compare with my triumphant haul of 32 sunfish that early summer morning in Northern Wisconsin.

We returned to the cabin and I watched with satisfaction as Uncle Dick cleaned those fish at a makeshift table he

had rigged waist high between two trees. Auntie Jean got the deep fryer going, and we had a splendiferous breakfast on the screened side porch, nestled right into the woods. No one said much about my victory. They didn't have to. I doubt I've ever enjoyed a breakfast quite so much.

I never did have any luck fishing after that. Like I said, I think I'm sort of like my Dad in the outdoor department. Once, to impress an old boyfriend, I agreed to go ice fishing in Northern New Mexico, but of course, I didn't catch a thing. Another memorable experience was cleaning the snow from the icy surface of a stream in Missouri and watching in silent wonder at the colorful, peaceful fish swimming below me. Other than that and a short-lived fish tank at home, I never have had much more to do with fish.

But no matter, because that early morning in Wisconsin so many years ago lives with me still. Sometimes the best things in life come free and unexpectedly, like beginner's luck. As for me, I'll always know that once, just once, I called, and the fish came.



Editor's note: Sarah Malone is a professional, bilingual storyteller. She chooses stories she loves and tells them in a way that brings the listener into the realm of the tale. Sarah presents original stories monthly on the University of New Mexico affiliate radio station. "Beginner's Luck" aired in June. To visit her *Long Ago and Far Away* web site, go to WWW.NEDCOMM.NM.ORG/~SMALONE. Sarah's e-mail address is SMALONE@NEDCOMM.NM.ORG.



The Minnow Catcher

© Lee Prosser

The old man squatted as old men do whose knees have seen better days, and there was a hint of mystery to the angle at which he leaned forward over the rapidly running creek. He knew the minnows were there, although he could not see them as clearly as he once did many seasons ago. The sun touched his white hair and white eyebrows and passed into the clouds. Then his hands touched the minnow, the first one, and he remembered when he was a boy at the carnival eating cotton candy; he let it go free. Five more touched his strong hands and fingers, and with each came a memory of things past: going fishing with his parents in the mountains; going on his first date to a drive-in theater and watching the movie; a war in Asia he felt fear and sadness in and was glad when he could escape it and come home away from the killing fields; his first collection of poetry published and making new friends through his words about nature; an early hiking trek to the Eastern Sierras. He sighed, touching one more, knowing that it was something wonderful and it whispered to him that life was good yet, and to go and touch other minnows in other fresh streams as long as he lived, and he thanked the small fish for allowing him to forever be a minnow catcher in the rivers of time and memory which refresh at each bend of the river for those who dare to dream. It was a good day for being a minnow catcher.



I Met Todd Today

© Ed Jacobson

I met Todd today, and am the richer for it.

“Excuse me,” I asked, “can you help me remove the pool cover?” Wouldn’t you ask the handyman for a hand? I knew I liked him even before I extended my hand.

In so short a time, he did all this:

He told me and showed me who he is, plainly and unself-consciously: a man to whom the eternal verities matter, in this moment and in the next.

He fed my hunger for first-hand accounts of Taos when it was still Taos.

He taught me an important lesson for my embracing Taos, and for my broader life: how he moved here, ruefully knowing how the coming years would change New Mexico, but securely knowing that his own perspectives would mellow at a faster pace.

He reminded me of a lesson I sometimes forget about the exquisite choice between being alone with yourself *versus* being with another when you might be giving away something of yourself.

He told me the story of his — and others’ — building the dome, a tale of craftsmanship, pride, and heart. And suddenly I understand more deeply the workers who built the Statue of Liberty.

Oh, yes... he helped me to roll up the pool blanket and, in the process, reminded me about patience and care.

He demonstrated his love of this land, and spoke of the lure of his upcoming winter on an island in the Mariannas. And I witnessed how difficult it is to let go when roots are sunk deep in the soil.

I had been opened wide by the writing seminar, and was feeling good and fine. Maybe meeting Todd was what all the seminar talk of “touching the sacred” was all about. All I know is that after meeting him, I feel richer, better about the species, and a little more confident that things will be all right.

Gavilan Walk

© Hillevi Ruumet

The Earth breathes as I walk.
I breathe along — and then
A song arises in my throat
And bounces off archival rocks
Of red and gold —
Reverberates within my heart
With tales of old,
Of life lived long ago beneath this place
My feet tread now with reverence,
And love.

I hear a critter chorus and,
As part of this life stream,
I add my voice to theirs:
A whispered shout of joy — *I am!*
That fades into the wind.
A hummingbird replies
With wings a fuzzy blur,
And then a winged locust flies
With clicking sounds,
Before my eyes displaying
Rainbow hues —
Its flight
A dazzle in the warm sunlight.
Then back to ground it drops to rest.

Is this a test
For me?
To see that I, too, am a creature,
Free to rise and fly, descend, and then
Sleep in the arms of Earth again —
To rise with yet another day
And sing another song
In yet another play of Spirit in disguise,
Unfolding
As the Earth
Before our eyes?





Youngstown

© Alice Spencer

Thanks to my trusty radar detector, I made excellent time with no mishaps. In just six and a half hours, I turned off Route 11 onto Youngstown's Mahoning Avenue. Soon I could see the smoke-blue water tower that marked the approximate location of my dad's house. It had been almost eight years since I first visited Dad there. On my first drive through, I was dumbfounded. Why had he insisted on retiring *here*? It was his childhood home, true enough, but to my uneducated eyes it was the kind of place you could love *only* as a hometown — now very dismal, rundown, and dangerous. In the time since then, I'd actually grown fond of the sights along Mahoning, especially the brown fiberglass horse on the roof of the pawnshop. The parking lot was filling up at Scachetti's, a tiny but superb Italian restaurant. Crossing the intersection of Mahoning and Meridian, I passed the Village Discount Outlet Store, where I had purchased roughly half my wardrobe for next to nothing. In that same strip mall was a branch of the Mahoning National Bank, which had been robbed the last time I was in town — purely coincidental.

During my previous visits, Dad showed me the sights — the places where he and his friends used to live, the field atop the west side water reservoir where they had played football, the old Chaney High School, and the once bustling downtown Youngstown. He described how long lines of people had once waited for streetcars there, and how enchanting McKelvey's Department Store had been at Christmas time. We wandered through the truly beautiful Mill Creek Park, where he and his parents had cooked breakfast outdoors on Saturday mornings long ago. As a little girl, I had enjoyed listening to my grandmother reminisce about her sister Cora. When Dad and I visited the mausoleum where Cora had been laid to rest, it felt strange to stand before the very real nameplate of someone who had always seemed like a fictional character. Our travels often took us past the ghostly steel mills, reminders of Youngstown's industrial past whose closing had sharply reduced its population and prosperity.

As I came to see Youngstown through my father's eyes, I increasingly ignored present-day reality and adopted his magical memories as my own. What a pair we were — two detectives sporting rose-colored glasses!

— from *The Old Detective's Daughter*
© A. V. Spencer

I Remember

© Ross H. Spencer

I remember a covered bridge
And a barn with a Mail Pouch sign
And a cold, flashing stream
And milk that had cream
And the odor of Christmas tree pine.
I remember a spotted dog
And his ear-splitting mailman bark
And moss on a stump
And a rusty old pump
And crickets that chirped after dark
And summer days and autumn nights
And new snow softer than cotton
And the sweet rush of spring.
How the memories cling!
The good things are never forgotten.



Do you remember...

- Blackjack chewing gum
- Wax Coke-shaped bottles with colored sugar water
- Candy cigarettes
- Soda pop machines that dispensed bottles
- Coffee shops with tableside jukeboxes
- Home milk delivery in glass bottles with cardboard stoppers
- Party lines
- Newsreels before the movie
- P.F. Flyers
- Butch wax
- Telephone numbers with a word prefix (Olive - 6933)
- Peashooters
- Howdy Doody
- 45 RPM records
- S&H Green Stamps
- Hi-fi's
- Metal ice trays with levers
- Mimeograph paper
- Blue flashbulbs
- Beanie and Cecil
- Roller skate keys
- Cork popguns
- Drive-ins
- Studebakers
- Wash tub wringers

— Anonymous

The Leave Taking

© Ric Giardina

The man looked back, his body, sagged in sadness, turning.
Early morning light, gray and damp, draped itself around him
A shroud of simple, daily sadness as he looked to see
If she was looking back as well to see him as he went.

The sign was gaily painted, bright with yellow, blue, and red.
“Best Start PreSchool” it read, as though to push away
His fears and give him absolution. And in some way it did,
For they had chosen well this place they left their child each day.

And yet there was no joy in leaving her. His wife must go
To her routine an hour before him, and so to him it fell each day
To take the focus of their life and leave her at a stranger’s door,
Like some repeating version of a modern fairy tale.

Not knowing what the day would bring for her, both of them
Would miss the joys and fears that came her way while
Others wiped her tears and kissed the tiny bruises as she learned.
He could not face how much they missed. They had no choice.

Yet every morning he must face it still. This task was his.
His wife, he noted with both envy and with gladness
Drew the straw by circumstance that let her drive each day
To where that eager, tiny face was waiting, just for her to come.

But for him every morning was the same. The hurried ready-making
To get her to her place so he could get to his. That moment of
Exquisite sadness as they parted at the door, his turn to walk away,
His head and heart full, knowing it would pass as his day busied him.

His eyes refocused from his mind, and he looked out again
To see her one last time before his day would capture him
And hold him in its grasp. He saw her, not engaged, but looking
Through the window after him, to see if he would see her one last time.



Editor’s note: Ric Giardina is founder and president of Spirit Employed, a consulting and training company whose mission is to encourage, inspire, and model personal authenticity in the workplace. Ric also teaches at San Jose State University and hosts the Bay Area radio show, *WorkLight™ with Ric Giardina*. His articles, essays, and poetry have been widely published, and he is working on a new book about tools for consciously creating community in our lives. A collection of Ric’s poetry — *Threads of Gold* — will be released early this fall, available through WILLOWISLEPRESS@SPIRITEMPLOYED.COM. Ric’s e-mail address is RIC@SPIRITEMPLOYED.COM.

Within Me

© Beverly Addante

I looked everywhere for you — for me,
the TV model, the cover of *Vogue*,
the younger woman with the thin thighs.
No, not me — not you.

Some people are so sure
they know you.
Others keep looking and asking.
Show yourself to me, God,
tell me the answer for me!
Yet, I’m not sure
I even *deserve* to know you.

As I listened to the wise,
and certainly the more worthy,
I waited for them— for *someone*
to tell me.

No one could tell me,
though I asked many,
and they did give me *their* answers,
though not mine — not you.

Looking for God
in so many places,
in so many men —
surely *they* were God.

There were glimpses of you
the times when I felt connected, at peace.
I waited for you to tell me more.

I waited for you to show yourself,
To give me a sign,
But I see *you* were waiting for *me*.

As I felt the yellow in the flowers
jump up to say hello,
I knew it was you.

I know it’s you when I see
the red, yellow, and gold in leaves.
I know it’s you
preparing the earth for winter’s rest.

I see you in the young woman,
the serious man, the older woman,
as their spirit greets me.

It just *couldn’t* be so simple —
you just *couldn’t* be in everyone,
you *couldn’t* be me.

Then I felt you in the earth
when I planted my garden.
I saw you in the bloom of my flowers.

And then every new idea became you.
I wondered why *I ever* thought
I had to do more to be me,
to be you.



The Misty Portal

© Bob Mason

It isn't something you see every day. There are too many oddly assorted components that must be present at just the right time and the right place for it to be commonplace. First, the atmospheric conditions must be favorable. The air must have a high humidity content and be absolutely dead calm. Next, the temperature has to be going down, as in the early evening just before sunset. Then the terrain has to be just right. It must be sloping gently down to a shallow valley, preferably one with a small stream running through it to help raise the humidity. Finally, we need an airport adjacent to the bottom of the valley with a runway going slightly uphill from the valley. When all of these conditions are met, it is possible for a mist to develop in the lowest part and lie there at treetop height like a tired cloud ready to sleep quietly for the night. Now the stage is set, and we need the actors and the action. If at this time, a small plane comes in to land over the mist, we may see an example of God's own architecture. As the plane passes low over the mist, lands on the runway, and taxis to the ramp, the mist behind it will slowly start to break apart in the middle and rise at the edges in a huge arch that may attain one hundred feet or more, curling inward at

the top until it forms what architects call a *broken pediment* and commonly use as an ornamental arch over a doorway or picture or mirror frame. It will then hang there for several minutes and slowly sink back down to its former level. Any well schooled pilot can tell you that this phenomenon is caused by wing tip vortices — a swirling of the air off the end of the wing as it creates lift in its passage. Even though the plane flew over (not through) the mist, it reacts to that passage. It is a strange and eerie reaction, occurring very slowly and possibly taking as long as five to ten minutes to form and dissipate. The tip vortices explanation is the logical and correct one, but I prefer to think of it as God's own decorative arch over the portal to our little grass strip.



Heroes

© Julia Marie Simons

Our broad-shouldered
golden-voiced
idols
with their
plastic melodies
plastic harmonies
plastic ideologies
live a bubblegum life
die a bubblegum death
collecting dust
on the 9.99 shelf
at Blockbuster



Editor's opinion: During the search for John F. Kennedy, Jr.'s missing plane, some news commentators wondered at the widespread, overwhelming concern for someone who had not yet "achieved his potential," presumably by becoming a politician and winning election to some public office, such as Mayor of New York. Of course, his father's assassination and the public fascination with the Kennedy family were contributing factors, but no other Kennedy could have inspired such emotion. It seems to me that a man who lived his life in such a way that an entire nation was heartsick at his passing definitely achieved his potential.



The hero is one who kindles a great light in the world, who sets up blazing torches in the dark streets of life for people to see by. The lightworker is the person who walks through the dark paths of the world, themselves a light.

— Felix Adler

Sweetwater Creek Remembrances

© Lee Prosser



Guilty

© Stephanie Oniones

We felt almost guilty being there.
She knew we never liked her;
we even laughed at the clothes she wore.
Yet, we were with her.
Comforting her, watching her cry.
We felt so guilty staring at the layers of bandages.
She saw through our nervous expression,
and frequent glances at our watches.
She probably wanted us there as much as
we wanted to be there.
But we stayed,
like strangers trapped in an elevator.

Good Bye and Good Bye

by Dorothy May

Good bye and good bye and good bye.
To another person and
to another experience.

Fare well. Be well.
I cannot tarry.
I have been warmed by your fire.
I have sat and rested
on your hearth.
I have been refreshed
by your waters.

I leave you with
sorrow in my heart.
I hoped
you would come along.
I cannot go back.

I hope I have
enriched your life.
My way would be much easier
in your city,
but my spirit screams out for
life and living.

My spirit fills my eagle
and flies away.



— from *Windblown* by Dorothy May
© Patchwork Press

Images flood my mind as I float back
on memory links to that time when I
was young and full of adventure, and
the memories come forward like lovely
dancing fairies in a magical grove as I
remember those whose paths I crossed.
Travels, always the travels, and with
them, meeting people. California. The
1960s. A different USA then — pulsating,
emotional, yet peaceful, too.

Faces come to me. I recall them.
There is Christopher Isherwood,
Don Bachardy, Dan Duryea, Michael
Rennie, Richard Carlson, Tuesday
Weld, Aldous Huxley, August Derleth,
and then would come
many others, later, such
as Swami Chetanananda,
and others who stepped
into the images of my life
and created a moment of
passage that is as fresh as
the day or night it came.
Michael Rennie at a restaurant in Santa Monica,
Dan Duryea at a grocery
store, Richard Carlson at
a clothing store, Tuesday
Weld at a restaurant,
Isherwood walking on the Santa
Monica mall.

Thoughts. Aha, as Swami
Chetanananda told me, “Do good and
be good.” And Isherwood saying,
“Every moment is a new opportunity,”
a thought also echoed by W. D. Firestone.
Do good and be good. Be good
and do good. Every moment is a new
opportunity. Hinduism. Vedanta. Supernatural topics. Music. Movies. Actors. Actresses. Writers. Uncanny images of seeing bizarre love-making on a deserted beach one evening while passing by on a midnight walk. A parrot

flying towards the sun on a lazy, hazy
summer morning and vanishing into the
light, never to return — simply there,
simply gone, and that was the way it
was. Thoughts of gentle times and
magical times and fun in the sun with
those who were just ordinary 9-to-5
folks whom I saw often and who lived
the American Dream of California,
dreaming in the 1960s, not knowing
that it would be only a mere misted
imagery of pretty photographs by 1999
as the century came to an end. But *we*
did not come to an end, and we went
on. Some of us died in pursuit of the

dreams we held dear,
while others altered those
dreams to fit changing
times of creative mental
development. And then
there were others who
would stay in the 1960s,
never to venture out
again.

I remember, I remember. Remembrances
of things past. Sitting
here in the sweet wilderness
of my mind on the
bank of Sweetwater Creek. Remember,
remember, remember. The dreams have
matured and so have I.

Share with one another love and
passion and compassion and understanding.
Be good and do good. Every
moment is a new beginning, a new opportunity.
I touch the gentle currents of
Sweetwater Creek and smile, and remember
it all over again. A jazz note
sounds on a piano, and it is my turn to
swim, and I become my own coda to
the music as I dive deep into the inviting
creek awaiting me. And time will
never have a stop, but mutate into other
images, other times, and places.



Lord make us mindful of the little things that grow and blossom
in these days to make the world beautiful for us.

— W. E. B. Du Bois



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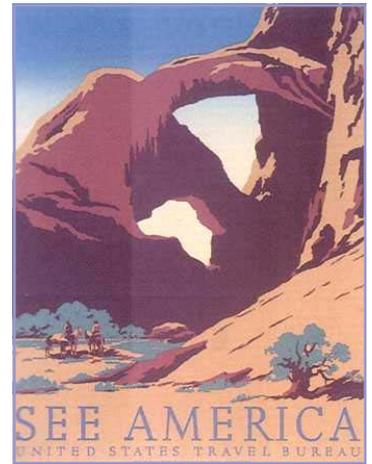
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Themes: Each issue of *Voices* is focused on an announced theme, in addition to a seasonal theme. Content is not necessarily restricted to themes, however.

Next issue's theme: Myth and Fantasy

Submissions deadline: October 31, 1999



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Where Was I?

© C. Schaefer Manette

Today I started out
In morning's twilight
As I used to do.
Sixty dark eyes
Thirty tan bodies
Stared back at me.
My heart leapt
"The deer, they are here!"
"We've been here all along."
Where was I?

Choices

© C. Schaefer Manette

I climbed the highest butte
And saw far and wide about me.
But where was little wren
Who peeps and seeks
In the rock shadows?



My Valley

© Sonja Britton



Cotton candy clouds,
mountains in cobalt shrouds,
alizarin blossoms top cacti
while the scent of pine floats by.
Sassy mountain jays
run other birds away
and my heart smiles
as I watch my valley play.
The morning breeze caressing trees,
will turn to wind so soon,
and later in the afternoon
may even bring monsoon.
The sweet smell of mountain air
washed clean when it rained,
precious moisture everywhere
my valley again sustained.

Connection

by Dorothy May

I have heard the cry of my soul
for release from the darkness
of invisibility.
The pain of crying alone,
of laughing where no
sound is heard.
The despair of
breathing raggedly,
feeling jagged, shattered, separated.
Alone.
My poetry connects me
to other souls striving
to find Voice, to be heard,
to become seen at last.

— from *Windblown* by Dorothy May
© Patchwork Press

