

POETRY
by David Plain
Aamjiwnaang First Nation

Rendezvous with an Ancestor

This poem consists of rhyming couplets describing a memory. It remembers a hot summer's day, an approaching thunder storm and an old man. The old man is my grandfather who enjoyed nothing more in his old age than a good cigar and a visit from his great-great grandfather. Nimikiins or Little Thunder was an Ojibwa War Chief who visited us often on those hot summer afternoons. There was nothing I enjoyed more as a boy than to sit with him on that veranda on Exmouth Street and take in Nimikiins' awesome power.

Searing sun beats down on asphalt
Too hot to tread the feet does assault
Hot weather calls for shorts and tank top
And lone robin chirps for nature's raindrop

Hot stagnant air harms cool breeze belief
But shade covered porch provides some relief
Gentle warm air washes over the face
And rustles the leaves high in their place

Spring loaded screen door slams shut behind
Old man on bowed legs shuffles to find
His favourite seat on rocker his choice
He'll sit in silence, he'll add no voice

He takes out cigar his favourite pass time
To smoke on his thoughts of past paradigms
He strikes Eddy's match, he draws on White Owl
As robin awaits a response to its call

Ominous clouds the horizon's hedge
Flashes alight dark billow's edge
Tempest approaches but not quick enough

Note: Poem submitted and published to the Lambton Mosaic Project.

While quivering lips draw uneasy puff

Dark sky alights with electric display
Ozone's burnt odour drives robin away
Thunderous cracks produced the scent
Repeats and repeats until it is spent

Storm travels eastward enabling blue sky
Above cooled pavement stream rises high
Robin returns to hop all about
Then tugs on a worm the rain has coaxed out

The old man relights content at his visit
Nimikiins returned his power's implicit
To visit descendant and relive the time
When enemies quaked at this warrior's prime.

Cold Winter Chores

A day in the life of the author circa 1954. Dead of winter chores: it was my duty to arise from my unheated, but insulated attic bedroom first, get a fire going in the kitchen and re-stoke the coal furnace in the cellar so the home would be comfortably warm for parents and siblings when they arose. I loved this job not only because it made me feel useful, but it also taught me the value of doing something for others.

The kitchen is heated by coal burning chamber
A brick is warmed in the kiln so tender
The burners and oven are natural gas
But this breathless comrade's warmth won't last.

Jack bent has bid Rochester good night
Mantle clock chimed, nine times it is right
For boy to bunk in for a long winter's night
Where breath can be seen in pale moonlight

Up attic staircase boy trudges alone
A cordless heating pad his very own
Hot brick in flannel to help keep him warm
At least for a time till cold overwhelms

Numerous blankets help keep him in place
Snug in his bed his dreams to embrace

Note: Poem submitted and published to the Lambton Mosaic Project.

While fires die down and cold overtakes
The warmth of the home, then morning breaks.

Twilight breaks through frosted panes to awake
The lad to his chores, frigid floors that await
The warming that comes with new fires stoked
By the youth who prepares a welcome evoked

Down staircase he's nibble, cold hot-pad in tow
Cook stove's coal chamber is first to bestow
A welcoming heat from logs that were split
A mercury reverse after kindling's been lit

The boy and his bucket tread down cellar stairs
Where slumbering behemoth has lost all its care
If octopus left its purpose just dies
But boy pokes and prods causing sparks to arise