

**2016 Roger M. Jones Poetry Contest
Honorable Mention: Ryden Lewis**

The Life of a Skipped Stone

A life of brief fame.

Whether by man or by nature
the stone somehow
came to reside on the shoreline.
It may have taken years:
Tens, hundreds, thousands
For the stone to arrive
at its waterfront home.

Suddenly picked up
by an eager child
(Or an eager parent)
And thrown
Heaved
Hurled across the water.

And for a fleeting moment,
All eyes are trained
Those around are entranced
No care is greater
Nothing in the world is more important.

But when skipping ceases
scrutiny dissipates
the stone sinks
forgotten
To rest for years:
Tens, hundreds, thousands

Perhaps weary and ready to rest
Perhaps wishing to be skipped again.

Orpheus

I don't think that I have to look back.
I won't look back.

Please follow me on my way home.
I have to be with you and your heart

I know you're back there
At least I think you are

I won't look back.

If only shadows could speak
I'd ask them a simple favor

“Please tell me she's there”

They say faith is a good thing.
Could these steps be any steeper?

Doesn't help to have an audience
The souls of the damned
Cheering or jeering?

I won't look back.

Remember

Days like this are ones you remember.

It's funny,
Over 19 years
Almost 7000 days past.
Most floated past
Driftwood on a river

But you remember ones like these

The weather was mediocre
Not spectacular
Overcast, no rain
Not ideal for early July

The water on the lake was calm
Calm enough to see the reflections of the fireworks
As they went screaming upward,
then outward.

But what I remember most
Sitting around the fire late at night
Setting up the chairs
Not too close to the fire
Too hot
But not too far away
as to not feel the warmth.

Of all the days to remember
I won't complain about this one.

Grandpa

I remember when you taught me to ride a bike
We'd go to the park down the road
To face falls, cuts, bruises
You'd buy me a matchbox car after each day
until I finally learned to ride on my own

Do you remember teaching me to whistle?
It was a simple melody
One I didn't think too much about until later
One I always seemed to find myself whistling
You even taught me the words
"Hail! To the Victors Valiant..."

We'd drive to Philadelphia every year
More than nine hours each way
We'd play ping pong, baseball, cards.
I don't think I ever beat you in ping pong.

You'd tell me about Michigan
College in the 1950s
How you met Grandma at the Baptist church on campus.

I was too young to really understand much about college.
You passed before I ever visited campus
Decided I needed to apply
Accepted
Committed to attend.

Speaking at your funeral was the hardest thing I've done
I understand it better now that I'm older
How death is a part of life.
I can't decide if that makes it easier or harder.

I wish you could've known that I'm here
Just like you were.

I hope you're proud.

Piano

“Make six chords”

This week,
starting in the key of D
between two D notes
an octave apart
I add two more notes in different combinations

D major.
Good place to start
D minor.
Only slightly different
G major.
Moving along
G minor.
I've always liked G
B minor.
Ominous sounding
B flat major
Oddly shaped

Six chords.

Simple changes giving distinct sounds
The power of simple differences
Echoing
Reverberating
Through more than melodies and harmonies
Through all fields,
academic
artistic
creative and analytical.

Simple changes
Six chords.