

Home

Spring 2010

Winter 2010

Autumn 2009

Summer 2009

Spring 2009

Autumn 2008

Summer 2008

Spring/Summer 2008

Winter/Spring 2008

Editor's Note

Guidelines

Contact

Three Poems

by Jerry Durick

The Bomb

Once we talked about it as if it were an inevitability, the sum of our collective sins. It was big – it drove agendas, kept us up nights, energized us through those predictable cocktail parties and endless coffee breaks -- the dullness of the 50's, the more stirring silliness of the 60's and the 70's, and even the numbness, the draw down dumbness of the 80's. We could talk about mutual annihilation between sips, whole hemispheres disappeared as we lit up, missiles pointed at the heart of our enemy, at our own hearts, as we reached for another donut or another chip.

Now the scale of our talk trails off – bombs show up in sneakers and suitcases, are bought and sold, they say, by displaced generals and disgruntled scientist on the internet, down alleys, around back, out of car trunks in Hackensack. We no longer hunker in a bunker, waiting for the all clear whistle. We now measure and mourn our losses at the pump, in lines in terminals, at borders, in confused political speeches, in vague references to vague enemies with vague agendas and names we rarely pronounce correctly. Bomb, oh bomb, where has it gone? So simple, so splendid, just one push of a button – and we're gone, all gone.

Witness

It never happens far enough away,
reasonably deniable, only faintly
visible in the distance, or around
some corner, over there, the other
side of the fence, or stand of trees.

Rather, it always happens right here
with me so close I taste it, smell it,
feel its heat on my face, hear screams,
the murmurs, its quick breath dying
to the hum that always settles in place.

It's as if dreadful events sort themselves
around my day, arrange themselves
in a proper chronology to fit my steps,
adjust to the swivel of my head, my eyes,
draw the focus of my attention to them.

It's as if I were born to watch this, be here
at this moment, hold my breath, my scream,
watch each detail tell itself, memorize it,
be here, and not walking away, be here, a victim
caught up in circumstances, saying what I saw
over and over to anyone who will listen.

Quake

At first in a quake the dishes begin to shake,

then cans and bottles begin to fall, and the wall
loses shape and makes you see ceilings and
surfaces in new and dangerous ways, then
they have their way, begin to sway, then give,
crumble and fall, but most important thing of all
is to keep moving, ignore windows, distrust doors,
run with your hands up over your head as if this
storm of steel, this hail of concrete, this rain of ruin
could be held off by a gesture and a few tears.

They say that once it begins it becomes everything,
you forget certainty and quiet, your house, your
office, your school, your factory, your church,
your everything come down on you, crush the life
you've led, make dust clouds and trash heaps of
time and trust, trap you in airless minutes, hours, days
till they find you, count you, then bury you again.
They say the sound is terrifying, it's like thunder
continuing on into all the senses, it becomes all color
and touch, all odor, all taste, all you'll ever remember.

Jerry Durick is presently a writing teacher at the Community College of Vermont, after a long career teaching literature, humanities, and writing at Trinity College of Vermont. His training in poetry included several summers at the Frost Place Poetry Festival and a poetry writing seminar with Billy Collins in Galway, Ireland. His recent poems have appeared in the *Onion River Review*, *Delta Epsilon Sigma Journal*, and in the anthology, *The Breath of Parted Lips: Voices From the Robert Frost Place*.

Copyright 2010, Jerry Durick. © This work is protected under the U.S. copyright laws. It may not be reproduced, reprinted, reused, or altered without the expressed written permission of the author.