





Nancye Raye Holston Moses

## Time to Go

When it's time to go  
I'll probably know

So let me go peacefully  
Even if I don't know sunshine from rain  
I'll know the aggravation of constant pain

So let me go quickly  
When I no longer want delicious things to eat  
You'll know my will to live is beat- so don't  
Artificially feed me!

Many people much better than me have died  
And I'm curious to see what's on the other side  
Or maybe our spirit just flits among the living  
And if we've lived right we can go on giving and forgiving

So when it's my time to go  
Don't give in to woe  
'Cause I probably won't be leaving early!



Background to the poem “Time to Go”

## The Night My Daddy Died

(2013)

... Finally after several nights of seeing that he was tired of it all, I knew what I was going to do. I was going home to my kids and I was going to pray. I went to bed exhausted and it was a rather warm night so I left my second floor bedroom windows open.

Somewhere between 1am and 3am I was awakened by a strong yet gentle wind. It was like I could see the breeze as well as feel it and I had a feeling that my daddy had left. My stepmother called me fairly early in the morning and told me that my dad who had been flat on his back for days had sat straight up with his eyes wide open. Perhaps he saw the light at the end of the tunnel.

Reflecting on this experience caused me to write a poem that I plan to give a copy of to each of my children and grandchildren.

Nancye Raye was born in 1937 in Ames, OK to Charles and Ruth Holston. Her mother died when she was 4 or 5 yrs old which impacted her greatly and led her to writing as a form of refuge, self expression, and therapy. In her words,

“I write to amuse myself and other people.

I write to possibly explain why I am what I am.

I write sometimes when I hear a rhythm in my mind and think it will help make a pleasant piece of poetry.

I write to leave some history of my family for the next generation.”

Her father married again and her parents blessed her with a baby sister to dote on and share her hopes, dreams and woes as well. They tap danced and played piano and Nancye dreamed of bright lights on a big stage.

When she was 17 years old, her family moved to a university town, Fayetteville, AR. It was in Fayetteville where her four children were born and ran like bohemians through the hills and forests.

But you could say that it wasn't until 1984, that she found her home. At the suggestion of her son, Eric, she moved to Austin, TX. It was here that she loved to seek out a good play or listen to live music with her grandsons, eat ice cream, write her musings and explore to her heart's content.

Most of all she loved to get together to talk and tell stories with friends and family.

## The Day the Indians Came

Nettie Mae started working at her dad's grocery store when she was 13- so she must have been about 14 when some excitement came to town and to her dad's store. She and her stepmom were the only ones working that day. Her dad, Chick Holderman, was on the road selling tools. Nettie never knew the exact reason. She knew he was owed quite a lot of money because of the credit he extended to local farmers during bad harvest years- could be that or it could be, he just needed a change.

One of his first jobs when he was young was as a traveling salesman and maybe he just wanted to be on the road again. Nettie could certainly understand that and had even entertained the idea of running off with carnival folks that showed up about once a year. Her dad came back on a regular weekly basis and checked on things and fixed anything that needed fixing. But he wasn't due in for a day or two.

Nettie Mae was busy dusting cans on the shelves. The store was in the part of Oklahoma fairly close to the Panhandle. There was usually a lot of wind that blew sand and dust. There was a big overhead fan at the entrance of the store and sometimes it pulled in dust. It was summertime and the heat was sweltering with only fans- no air conditioning.

It was harvest time for wheat farmers and there were a few farmers and ranchers who grew other crops as well as livestock. Ivan Moncastle grew broom corn and, of course, looked for the

## I Guess

(1999 after the accidental death of her son Eric)

I guess I thought it would never end  
That I'd never be asked to send  
A part of me into a vast unknowable space.

I guess I never thought I'd shake my head  
And, bewildered, realize a part of me was dead  
As the child that was ripped from me...  
And, yes, I believe that the Spirit lives on  
And, yes, I believe that the Soul is the Essence of a Life  
But in the here and now? Here in the why and how?  
How I miss that body and mind that was torn from me  
All too soon and too fast.

I guess I thought the past would be present  
and last and last and last.

I guess.



## Future Fantasy

If I have a home when I'm eighty-five,  
It won't be sold, while I'm still alive.  
It will be far enough away from nosey neighbors  
That I'll do what I want with the fruit of my labors.

I'll eat greasy food if I so desire  
And I'll drink wine and play with fire.  
I'll stand up to my children when they interfere.  
If you listen in, here's what you may hear,  
"So, you're worried about me, are you sis?  
Then listen to my stories and gimme a kiss.  
Did I throw you away when you started to dribble?  
No, I wiped you off and I didn't quibble.  
Son, I let you wear some God-awful clothes,  
So don't you be bothered when I go without hose.  
Did I talk too loud at Carol's wedding?  
Well it was an event I was certainly dreading.  
Kids I'll try very hard to not look like a fool,  
But when you've seen what I've seen it's hard to be cool.

The fact is, honies, I'm wise and I'm old  
And I don't have to do everything that I'm told.



cheapest possible labor which happened to be Native Americans which were at that time referred to as Indians. Ivan had a big flat bed truck and he drove to a near by town where a good percentage of the population was Indian.

The Indians who were willing to harvest broom corn jumped on the back of the big flat bed truck- bringing along a few tents, some bedding and a few drums, and prepared to make it as pleasant as possible. They may have had to provide all their food because an evening or two at the Moncastle farm, they were loaded up on the flatbed truck and came into town to Chick's store.

Mrs. Holderman was in the meat section of the store when the Indians arrived. Nettie Mae looked up from her dusting and casually walked over to the checkout counter where the adding machine and cash register sat. She could see her stepmother was not going to leave the meat counter area where the meat cleaver and other possible weaponry was. In fact, when Mrs. Holderman saw the large swarm of hot, sweaty brownish bodies in soiled clothes approaching the door, she told Nettie Mae to keep an eye on them and take charge of the cash register.

Nettie showed no fear because to her it looked like a fun time. She wasn't allowed to date, but she saw the possibility of flirting with some Indian boys. She'd always envied people with black hair, brown eyes, and darker skin than her boring blonde hair, blue eyes, and fair skin.

Oklahoma was a dry state at the time and Nettie Mae had already heard the stories about how some folks, especially Indians would drink wood alcohol, shaving lotion, vanilla flavoring, or anything that had some alcohol in it. She'd also heard that too much would eventually blind you.

The broom corn crew spread out all over the store- Nettie saw one group of the young guys checking out the vanilla and other liquid flavorings while another group gathered around the shaving supplies. She was fairly sure she saw a bottle or two of shaving lotion disappear into their pockets. Far be it from her to make an issue out of it. It seemed to her, the best thing to do was to keep everyone in a good mood. As Nettie walked the aisles, she went past the meat department. The meat cooler had a glass front. The scales where you weighed the meat sat on top of the refrigerated appliance so the customer could see as well as the clerk. As she walked by she noticed a rather good sized mama type Indian woman standing in front of the scales with her pointy finger holding up the scale tray that held the hamburger she was buying- just enough to knock off a little from the price.

Again, Nettie didn't think it was wise to make an issue of the great trick the woman thought she was playing. So Nettie gave a knowing smile and the woman smiled back and winked and took her hand away from the scales. The customers seemed to be testing the reactions they'd get. Since there wasn't much of a reaction, the broom corn harvesters decided it was time to go to their makeshift camp to eat, drink, and be very merry.

But, once again, he had the thorny feeling he wasn't getting the proper respect. And now with all the trappings, it wasn't at all what he'd come to expect.

So his Spirit, apparently dead at birth, was still the same when they played his dirge- The last words he spoke (or so they said) were, "I wish there was more than *when you're dead you're dead.*"



Or if it was what they'd been taught.  
As cigars tilted up and whiskey ran down,  
The 'good' old boys would strategize way into the night.

"If we can just get people to feel their pain and promise  
to cure it,  
We can get their vote all right."

"If we can convince 'em we'll take from the rich and give to  
the poor,  
That could run up the votes a little bit more."

Now all these guys would shake their heads sadly at the  
thought of another war  
But the economy did seem a little better when you sent  
poor young folks  
To fight on some distant shore.

"No more talk about that," said the chief politician,  
Folks just won't go for that. The time is right for a class war.  
If we can get 'em afraid of each other, we can fleece 'em a  
whole lot more!"

Bull sessions such as this seemed to last forever.  
The so-called public servants' jobs lasted over 40 years.

For a man that created nothing but illusions,  
He got rich and powerful enough to instill fears.

A few hours after they left, the folks in town could hear  
faint whooping and hollering and some drumming. It was  
exciting sounding at age 14 but after Nettie got older and free  
to go to some Pow Wows, it seemed to her the drumming  
was monotonous with no dancing sounds and no other  
instruments, but there was something spiritual about it and  
she loved their outfits with feathers. She enjoyed watching the  
little children stomping to the beat.

Maybe the spirituality struck her because of the history of  
the people performing and she thought back to their visit  
to her family's store. Why would those young laborers who  
were going to camp out and sleep on the ground feel any  
guilt about putting a few unpaid items in their pockets? I'm  
sure they were reminded often by their elders of how people  
of my family's color didn't feel any guilt about confiscating  
their hunting grounds and the animals they had hunted for  
centuries. A little shaving lotion and vanilla flavoring was a  
small price for us to pay.



## For His Honor

There is a small grimy spot in the Midwest that used to be a town.  
Before my time, I understand it even had a newspaper before it  
began its slow, rough slide down.

The unofficial mayor of the town owned the largest general store.  
He was the unofficial mayor because he didn't like fundraising for  
elections or anything where you had to keep score.

He said he had done that in his younger days playing baseball.  
But after he grew up he no longer viewed business and life as a  
game. He believed when you took care of business, there were less  
things that needed fixing.

He didn't think you could fight City Hall so best not to have one  
at all. And since there wasn't one, there wasn't any Law – except  
the national one. Why should there be? There wasn't any crime to  
speak of. Except a few squabbles and folks not paying their bills.  
But the mayor figured time was what took care of those ills.

He could listen to town talk as he did his work at the store. The  
office was open six to six (or when the last customer left). No slick,  
quick answers but you could tell by the look in his eyes he was  
listening with a mind quite deft.

No use makin' things any harder to figure out. So, no babbly  
gabby analytical advice. So when he asked, "What do you think is  
right? That was enough to make most folks think twice.

Why through wheelin' and dealin' and  
Whinin' and wheedlin'- politics!  
Great God Almighty he saw the light!  
No more dull hard work and struggle to keep the spirit high  
Politics was the answer with his talent to cheat and lie.  
He may have been vulgar and devoid of thoughtfulness  
But no one said he was dumb.

Smart enough to manipulate  
Take from and give to the right people  
Enough to make his conscience numb.

You gotta go along to get along  
His mentor had said "what's the ta do about principle  
between birth and death?"  
When you're dead you're dead.

The politician and his cunning cronies  
Felt that life was one big poker game  
Played in smoke filled rooms with other people's money.

And cheatin' a little wasn't any big shame!  
They all silently agreed that a card or two up your  
sleeve was ok  
If you didn't get caught...  
Far be it from them to wonder if they were born that way

## The Politician

(early 2000's)

Foul mouthed, shallow thinkin'  
Winkin', blinkin', stinkin' politician.

Money hungry from poor beginnings but  
Not nearly as poor as his ever changin' stories would have  
you believe.

Power hungry from poor folk- poor in spirit  
Maybe poverty-stricken in thought.

For a few short years that he considered a lifetime  
All he did was fret and grieve.

For some reason his peers wouldn't pay him proper respect.  
He thought it was his clothes and his car  
But it was what he'd come to expect.

His mama thought he was too special for the way  
things were.  
Isn't this what a lot of mothers think?  
But her message and how he received it was twisted enough  
To make both of their bitter hearts sink.

While the huge dusty ceiling fan whirled about in steady rhythm,  
the mayor listened in passing to the gossip about the 'simple-  
minded' folks just outside of town who were havin' problems again.  
The old man couldn't work, the kids were hungry and the old lady  
was down. He knew why the talk was going on here at the store.  
And silently as he looked at the stack of yellowed receipt books  
containing credit and IOUs, he calculated how many supplies he  
could send out with his wife.

He very seldom went out there himself anymore. He'd been so  
many times before and knew the poor would always be with us.  
Besides who was going to mind the store? But that was an excuse  
because he had help that had been with him for years and years.  
No, the wife could deliver the goods better than he could. He  
wasn't much for seeing or shedding tears.

The demand was there and he could supply. He had more to do  
than to listen to grown men cry. He'd developed some stomach  
problems now that he was older and he couldn't afford to get sick  
from the filth and the odor.

So he retrieved some banana boxes from the back, set 'em on the  
worn counter and began to pack the essentials most folks know  
have to be worked for.

Grimly, he told himself this time the box would hold beans, rice,  
no tobacco or pop, but what the hell those apples were close to  
spoilng. Maybe even the outdated candy for the five girls and two  
boys.

If he thought they'd use it he'd throw in shampoo to fight head  
lice. But no more cookies and cakes just because it would be nice. A  
few more odds and ends and that would be the end of that chore

Then he sprinkled red, oiled sawdust on the big wooden floor.  
And he swept and set up his saw. Determined now to lock the  
door, he noticed the old Dodge needed washing. He sidled onto  
the seat and drove up the sandy road to make his retreat.

About halfway home it suddenly dawned on him he'd forgotten  
to take Alice Edmond's groceries by. She didn't live that far but  
had a blind mother and no car. Alice looked after his little girl  
when his wife was sick or away. So he'd take care of that before he  
called it a day.

With a u-turn that made an arc in the sandy dirt, he returned  
to his store. Out of the Dodge, in and out the door, he'd try to  
finalize this day once more. Although he knew it wasn't over for at  
least an hour 'cause Alice would expect a nice long chat. She was  
a widow woman and didn't trust men except for Preacher Morgan  
and him.

With his left elbow stuck out the open window, he guided the  
Dodge down the only paved road- the one leading in and going  
out of town. As he passed Aaron Turk's Machine Shop, he saw that  
one of the bare hanging light bulbs was still on. The bulb was so  
covered with grease and filings it was a wonder Aaron could see.  
"That damned shop's as dark at dusk as it will be at midnight" the  
mayor thought.

He had heard talk that Aaron Turk invented stuff in there but had  
never heard of anything being sold or bought. Aaron made his  
living working on combines, tractors, and such. He was as dirty  
and greasy and disorganized as his shop. You were welcome to  
look at all the contraptions as long as you didn't touch.

Turning off the pavement and back into the sand, the mayor

## Untitled

(1980's)

Although it has been several years now, as I recall,  
A roadside stand was part of my pilgrimage in early fall.

It would strike me to go sort through the apples,  
walnuts and corn.  
This was only a start; a daylong journey would be born.

I'd go on wandering with others or maybe alone  
In search of old roads, new colors...  
The perfect pine cone.

Meandering, I'd shine another apple on my shirt  
Endlessly kicking leaves,  
Hoping to hit pay dirt.

I haven't gone there for many years  
To check the validity of my fears  
That the roadside stand, like time, has passed  
And once more I'll regret it  
Because it went too fast.

— B' —

## Dance of Love

(1976)

There's romance in the dance you dance  
And tenderness in the song you sing.

Nothing fast or even clever  
Our honeymoon will last forever  
I can tell by the romance in your dance.

Too many years of sadness  
Too many nights of madness  
I dreamed of you when days were long  
Just waiting for you to play my song.

My love, the dye is cast  
This is the love that will last  
I can tell by the song you sing.

Do you love me as I love you?  
No matter, my love will do.  
I'm willing to take the chance  
'Cause I love the dance you dance.

We'll dance on and on and on  
When others have come and gone.  
And when most loves have passed  
Our dance of love will last.



idled the Dodge in Alice's front yard. Alice and her mother were most likely in the back. Alice in the kitchen and the blind woman in the next room in the dark.

The mayor knew he'd have to listen and nod about the flowers. So he'd might as well take the path to the back past the hodge podge beds of primroses, poppies, buttercups, snapdragons, and jumping jack. He couldn't remember the difference between them and the petunias, the sweetpeas, larkspur, lily of the valley, and bishop's hat. But Alice would explain it again~ you could bet on that.

He wished he could keep 'em straight but he'd beg her pardon. It was simple to her but more complicated than his wife's rose garden. The mayor/ grocer knocked on the back door to the cool dark room housing the cellar where the canning was kept.

The cellar was under the sunny bedroom where the blind woman slept.

Alice would step down from the kitchen with little wet strands of hair stuck to her face. She wore it neatly pinned up, but this time of day it was all out of place. Her little pot belly that served as a shelf for her sagging bosom would lead her to the back door and the rest would follow. "Oh my, my it's Chick with the groceries!" she'd say. And they would both fall into conversation about the weather, the crops, the people in town or the familiar events of the day.



## A Barnyard Visit

(submitted as text for a picture book 1972)

Inside the barn, upon the hay,  
I saw a kitten one fine day.

As I walked out and looked around,  
There were chickens scratching the ground.

Further on, the cattle grazed  
And under the trees, the sheep dogs lazed.

The baby pigs scrambled about  
When their mama pushed them with her snout.

Ducks were waddling toward the water  
As the day kept growing hotter.

Colts were frisking here and there  
Within the sight of Mother Mare.

Running on I nearly fell,  
Startled by the dinner bell.

Then we sat down at the dinner table  
And each gave thanks that we were able  
To have such friends in man and beast  
And also enjoy our bountiful feast.



## A Spring Encounter

(early 1970's)

I saw a little rabbit go hopping down the path  
The dew on the flowers gave his toes a little bath.

I was hiding in a leafy bush where I thought he couldn't see.  
He hopped over, nibbled grass, and stared straight in at me.



## Sky Spy

A hawk glides gracefully through the air  
Searching for his daily fare.

Spies a rabbit  
And out of habit,

Swoops right down  
And tries to grab it.

