God? Even this fly
walking across the ceiling
stops often and prays.
Angels of the Sunset ................. 9
Briefing .................................. 3
A Christmas Light ..................... 11
An Evening Question ................. 6
Gathering ................................ 13
Graduation .............................. 7
A Haiku Quilt for Y2K ............. 1
Meeting .................................. 10
A Millennial Date ...................... 2
A New Beatitude ....................... 12
Shopping Cheap ....................... 8
Watching No Baseball ............... 4
What Lies Ahead ...................... 5

About Alan Harris .................... 14
A Haiku Quilt for Y2K

My house is burning--
a neighbor has brought coffee
which tastes excellent.

Hill of snowy pines--
has anyone let you know
about Y2K?

A falling red leaf
lightly taps my left shoulder.
Yes, I say--I’ve heard.

Orange maple leaves,
why can’t I prolong your lives?
“We’re the clock for yours.”

Sitting by flowers--
silence--until a petal
falls upon a stone.

Spring rain is falling
on a fountain shooting high--
not a drop confused.

Water drop forming
on this tree leaf tip--how does
it know when to fall?

Open, empty truck
parked beneath a star-filled sky--
what is there to haul?

The sun rises red
and fifty more pedants are
experts on haiku.

Desert sun cooling
hotly down the western sky--
lizards blink, stir, wait.

Lazy snow circles,
crystals landing like light planes
on brown grass runways.

Tulip buds in rows
bloom by bloom become cannons
shooting at the sun.

War in your closet
hangs somewhere behind your clothes
needing awful love.

New snow -- old snowman
leaning in the yard next door,
one coal for a wink.
A Millennial Date

I’m so glad we know of this magical forest—
don’t the clear waters here make us look younger?

End of the what?
Oh, that.
Here, let me pour you a Coke from our picnic cooler.

Diet or regular?
With or without ice?

Of course, a toast--
here’s to this endless earth
we’ve made and are made of.
May our one-triple-nined planet contrive to survive
this year of broadcast hysteria,
and may the Christian clickover of 2000 somehow
transform trumpeting holiness into selfless silence.

Magic tricks?
No, I have none.
There’s so much magic here in this forest,
here on this earth, here in our hearts,
that any more would be less.

Safe this year, are we?
As safe as we feel, I’d say--
and as safe as we love,
as safe as we give,
as safe as everything
we don’t understand.

We are flies on a ceiling which is also the floor
of a marvelous room above.
Count that room’s years base 10
and it’s a third millennium.
Count them base God
and oneness is far enough.

Another Coke?
Yes, thank you.
A toast to all the magic that keeps us safe
and all the daring that keeps us magic.
Briefing

Here is who you will be:
I. M. Ego
#1 My Place
Selfville, Body

Remember your address
and don’t neglect
to decorate your walls and
keep your place unsoiled.

You need to live here, yes,
because your past exertions
somehow built this place
according to your own design.

Here you’ll be safe,
with one catch--
you may not think
you are.

“Ego” has grown to be
an ugly word,
you’ll notice, but it
only means your walls.

How could you reach
a later hatching into light
if forced to learn and grow
unsheltered by these walls?

Now go, be, love, talk,
laugh, err, create, teach,
glimpse and lose and
glimpse the light again.

Anything is permissible but
everything is accountable
while living in this dwelling
that restrains while it protects--

until the day you hatch
into the waiting sunlight
with a realized reaping
and a grateful weeping.
Watching No Baseball

We are sitting behind left field,
you and I, alone in the stadium.
We watch home plate where
no batter swings at no ball
that no pitcher has pitched.

Intently we follow no action anywhere.

The scoreboard contains no numbers
about forgotten innings.

Behind home plate
no umpire fiddles with
his protective pad
or runs the game with
shouts and gestures.

We are very much here.

No catcher signals for
crafty pitches to be hurled
from the vacant mound.

We sit here
safely upheld by bleachers
empty of roaring rabble.

Undwarfed by
an immense space
entirely eventless,
we inhale silence.

No need for talk.

After just enough
emptying of minds,
seeing everything that is
and isn’t here
from arbitrary seats,
we know that it’s over.

Down the winding exit stairs
we climb without a word
behind no crowds
to the busy sidewalk.

We exchange glances
but don’t need to say
who won.
What Lies Ahead*

What lies ahead no human mind can know--
   Tomorrow may bring happiness or woe.
   We cannot carry charts
   Save the Faith that’s in our hearts
As down the Unknown Way we blindly go.

*Note: The above poem was not written by me, nor have I been able to discover the name of its author. I found it handwritten on the opening page of a 1941 wartime scrapbook kept by my grandmother, Theda M. Harris. I was strangely moved by this poem and felt it to be worth preserving and sharing. I’d be grateful to anyone who can tell me the name of its author.
   --A. H.
An Evening Question

Blackbirds crackle random sonic pepper under fading skies at end of day when silence brings more pain to birds than sounds held in can bear.

Up west, three backlit afterclouds, blue-gray, suggest a breathless blessing, outer sky to inner eye.

Two robins try antiphony positioned fence to fence and trade their choruses across a subtlety of dew.

Overhead, a helicopter’s growl subdues the singing birds who observe a silent minute waiting for the bully to be gone.

Next door, the dog barks out his being at something heard or felt and with each bark a girl shouts “Shut up!” until he does.

A cat comes walking by, surprised at me, too close, but quickly taking care to show no fear.

Quietly alert, I stare across this outdoor table--top all strewn with wings of maple seeds delayed from reaching earth--and I bow within.

My breath amazed at simple dusk, I fold in half, and half, and half, until there’s hardly any I.

This enigmatic sky now closing day with fake finality while straddling yin and yang abstains from answering my wordless evening question.
Graduation

Our ride
slows
to a halt

and the man says
“Everybody off.”

We don’t
quite know
where
we’ve been

and we’re a
little dizzy
as we step

down into
the future.
Shopping Cheap

Empty-feeling in this full-discount store, I notice others trancing by, glaze-eyed, behind their clinking lop-wheeled carts. Lured, are they, by the hook of free? Hypnotized by the hype of cheap? I wander hapless and mapless through thingful, clerkless aisles and chafe inside at where things aren’t.

PA speakers storewide announce who-cares specials, demand urgent price checks, summon somebodies to the front, then resume happy snippets of syrupy sambas.

Ah! A rare tagged homo employus-- I’ll catch him and be out of here. “Where are the reading glasses?” I ask his back before he can escape.

He gives robotic directions to Aisle 5, cinched with a “Can’t miss ‘em.”

Remember when store clerks would ask if they could help you, and lead you to your product, then stick around to make sure it was really what you needed?

Remember customers? Service?

Within this barn of bargains harried service-counter girls refund to waiting lines for slipshod quality, murmuring memorized apologies to jaded ears, then “Step up, please.”

Remember quality? Cordiality?

Absent is any quality counter to make up for poor service at the service counter.

Employees hired here for ho-hum per hour evade frazzled shoppers who, from all different wealths, squander the numbered heartbeats of their lives to search for bargains planted cleverly near high-margin impulse racks.

Remember joy? Hilarity?

Blindly, the free market (an oxymoron to the credit-card poor) ratchets money up to our finely-computered investors who downwardly squeeze more work for equal pay out of fewer desperates who hate the jobs they have which earn the scratch they need to take out bigger loans.

Remember philanthropy? Altruism?

No reading glasses found in Aisle 5. Did miss ‘em.

Aimless now in Aisle 7, I stop my cart to ask within: How might people market goods with love instead of greed? Is selfishness the ultimate?

As if an angel had the mike, the PA system broadcasts, “Follow the blue light…”, crackles, and goes silent.
Angels of the Sunset

Some lucky ones have claimed to see and even hear an angel or a host of them presiding in resplendence over countrysides or busy city neighborhoods.

Most angels seem to hover just where bright meets dim, and rarely show themselves to televisioned eyes or eyes that scan stock tickers for the best bonanza yet.

Some people yearn lifelong to see an angel near their morning porch or, ill, pray earnest prayers for healing angels who will touch them and dispel disease.

Anyone who has a western sky and something of an inner eye may sometimes notice sunset angels in their dance of shifting veils above the darkening ground.

Concealed and yet revealed in colors you can see between, these angels bless in silent bigness all whose eyes are listening and all with openness of heart.

So subtle are the wings of angels that you may not realize they’ve come and gone, except that innerly remains a glowing which seems just as good as knowing.
Meeting

Letters to mail
and a twilit beckon
from the dimming sky
tempted tonight
my walk to the mailbox
that never seems
to come to me.

At my first turn
the fat, lop-lit moon
shouldered me
and whispered,

“I’m here with you,
never not here.
Turn you to dust
or turn you to ash,
I will be here.”

I mailed my letters
and walked for home.

So simply it came to be--
my ageless friend and me
slipping past tree and tree.
A Christmas Light

At Christmas some will doubt--
they’d rather see first-hand
the legendary holy child
than hear fine stories told.

Some legends place a star
above the manger scene
to be a beacon guide
to men who had wise gifts--

but if a body of heaven
were wanted to remind folks
nowadays of this child
who was gifted and gave,

why not the unassuming moon,
whose quiet beaming gives
us all an inner warmth
akin to Yuletide happiness?

Humbly shines this second light,
relaying solar guiding rays
to people lost within a night
who wish to find a path.

Who hasn’t sometimes wished
to thank the moon for glowing
above a ride back home
from church on Christmas Eve?

The lowly moon a Christmas light?
How daily seem its rays to us--
no special star sent from afar
that never will be seen again.

If peace and softness were
required, the moon has both.
If mystery were needed,
where could more be found?

Perhaps someone is in the moon,
as nursery rhymes suggest--
let’s grant this may be true,
and this man or woman is you.

The moon inside you is
your inner manger birth,
and you inside the moon
shine gifts upon the earth.
A New Beatitude

Blessed are the shrinks
who'll listen to you hollah
for just a hundred dollah
when life completely stinks.
Gathering

A hush around the dying
lacks nothing for no words--

    forgiveness by default,
    love river-big,
    faltering philosophies,
    robbed expectations.

The air inside the air
seems ready to receive.
About Alan Harris

Born on June 20, 1943, Alan Harris was raised in Earlville, Illinois, a small farming community of about 1,400. His father Keith was a World War II B-17 pilot who for the rest of his life (he died in 1980) farmed the family acreage east of Earlville while also taking time out on weekdays to drive a school bus. Alan’s mother Margie served as a diligent housewife and mother of four children, and for many years was Head Librarian of the Earlville Public Library.

Although he studied plenty of poems (often half-heartedly) in the local elementary and high school system, it wasn’t until he majored in English at Illinois State University (minoring in trumpet and piano) that Alan began experiencing strange inner stirrings that resulted in some serious poems. His college poems seemed to spring from a new unknown place and seemed rather odd, yet were satisfying to write. Several were published in annual issues (1964-1966) of ISU’s literary magazine, The Triangle.

Alan and his wife Linda were married in 1966, and all through the next 35 years, new poems continued to emerge and seemed to need readers. Every year or two, between 1980 and 1995, he would assemble that interval’s crop of poems and self-publish a volume to give to family and friends.

In October of 1995, having acquired some HTML skills, Alan published on the World Wide Web all of his poetry books as Collected Poems. Within a year he added four more site sections: Thinker’s Daily Ponderable (original aphorisms), Stories and Essays, Christmas Reflections, and Garden of Grasses. The latter section, originally co-edited with Lucille Younger and now co-edited with Mary Lambert, is an on-line literary collection for work contributed by other authors.

In 1998 Alan’s literary collection took on its current Web address of www.alharris.com and in 2000 was given the title An Everywhere Oasis. After buying a digital camera and taking it to the forest, Alan published several photographic essays and poems which are now available in the site’s Gallery. Also offered are 76 audio poetry readings, with 20 poems being read by actor and friend Paul Meier and the others being read by Alan. New “Web-only” poetry books posted since 1995 are Writing All Over the World’s Wall, Heartclips, Knocking on the Sky, Flies on the Ceiling, Just Below Now, and a new 2001 work-in-progress entitled Carpet Flights. Launched in December 1999 with co-editor Mary Lambert, a new anthology entitled Heartplace began accepting and publishing work from contributing authors. In 1998 Alan’s son Brian composed and performed Bunga Rucka (a recording of which is offered on the Web site), which is based upon Alan’s poem of the same title.

Alan has earned his living in a variety of occupations—high school English teacher, junior high band director, piano tuner—all of these before settling into a long career of computer-related work. He retired in 1998 after 22 years’ service at Commonwealth Edison in Chicago, initially as a computer programmer, then a systems analyst, and later a computer training coordinator. For his final three years at ComEd he developed Web sites for its corporate Intranet and the Internet. Linda retired in 1999 after working for 20 years at an insurance company, but rejoined the work force in 2000 as a transcriptionist in a large medical clinic. Since retiring, Alan has been doing freelance Web design for individuals, non-profit organizations, and other non-commercial interests, as well as continuing his creative writing.