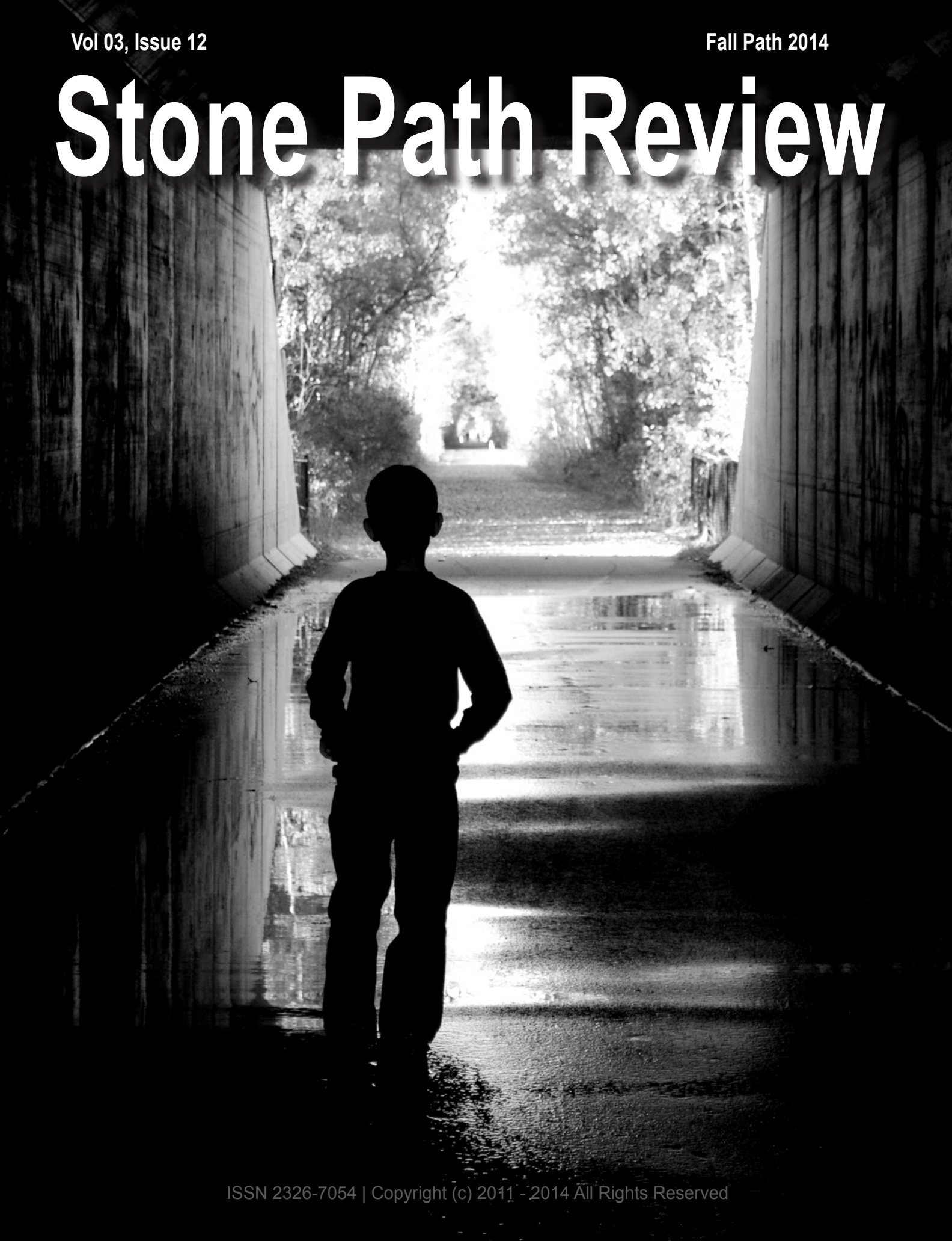


Vol 03, Issue 12

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# Stone Path Review





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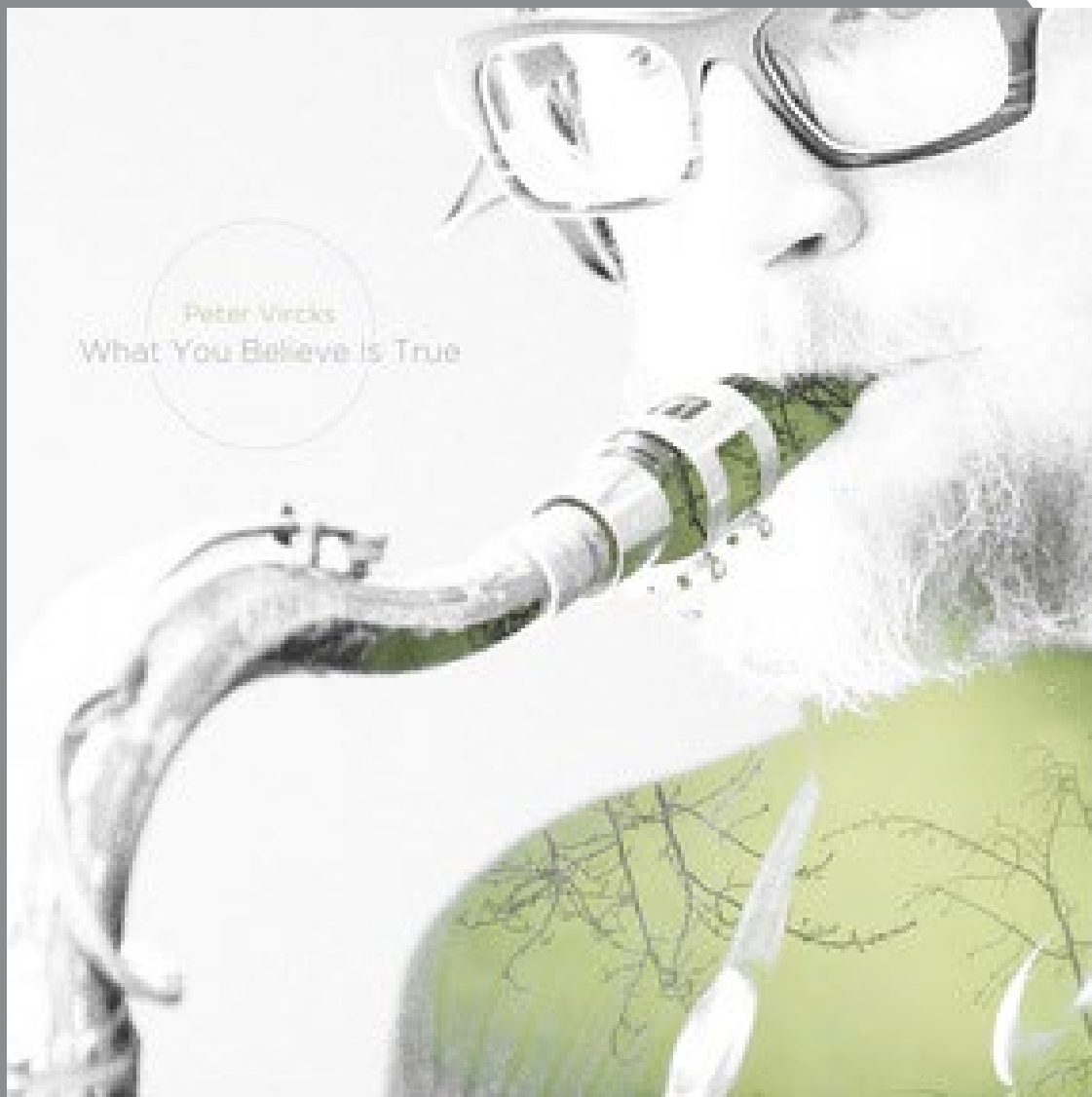
“Fear Not” by **Rohnda Monroy**

Location/image info: see page 23

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## **What You Believe Is True**

**album by Peter Vircks**

Now available at Music Baby and iTunes

## Introduction

by William Ricci

Every weekend spent breaking sweat and back, digging through topsoil and sand until the earth hardens and my fingertips and fingernails are caked with clay, my hands stained red, and my mind clear.

Every weekend spent in a dream, but not a sleeping dream - a dream where I can feel and taste the earth. Where tree shadows cross my gazing eyes, where the dragonflies tickle my hand, and I hear the raven's wings.

As I dig my bare hands into the overturned soil, the pungent smell of wet earth mixed with mountain mint fills my nose, and between deep roots, worms wriggle and turn back into the soil. Early morning sun scatters between the pine trees and reflects off dew clinging to the grasses.

What am I hoping to find beneath the layers? Is there an end goal, or the continuation of a journey started before memory?

With each layer, I am closer to the earth and further from the facade I built to survive each day. Are weekends enough to undo or settle the damage that has already been done by the cities of glass and concrete towering toward and blocking the heavens?

How many layers will and must I remove before I am done, satisfied, or closer to the truth?

I pause and close my eyes - something deep in the forest moves. The sun is warm against my skin and the wind rustles tall grasses. Two

ravens fly in from the east and circle overhead, frequent visitors we have named "Elvis" and "Priscilla", as they greet our arrival.

If we become what we harvest, what have I become today?

Thousands of trees stand in every direction that I turn. The many cycles of life litter that forest floor - pine needles, leaves, twigs, branches, stumps, roots, and rotted logs overtaken by mushrooms.

Prairie grasses and flowers quietly consume open spaces, returning to a natural order before machine and man arrived. Bees and birds feast on the bounty the land provides.

Hours pass and my entire body becomes my hands, my mind exists within my fingertips into the soil. There are other sounds and movement - and I hear and see them, my surroundings and what arrives on the wind rushing through pine.

The work today is done, but not by any finite definition or length of time. The sun has set, the sky has cleared, replaced by stars - so many I cannot count them the way we did as children - everywhere they sparkle in plain view, or behind the reaching limbs. I stop when I hear a tree fall, and nothing else. What could that be? Nature is telling me that enough work has been done today. Tomorrow I will be allowed to return.

During this harvest, what did I become?

Like the soil, I removed layers, gaining depth and closeness with the true person within, the soil that supports roots and nervous system.





## Awake

by Amanda Barusch

Winter sunrise kindles a tender  
mist as the bell bird call  
punctures  
your dreamscape.  
A breeze promises coffee and toast  
but  
your smoky hair and goose down  
still hold the night's heat.  
And the curtains whisper,  
"Not yet!"

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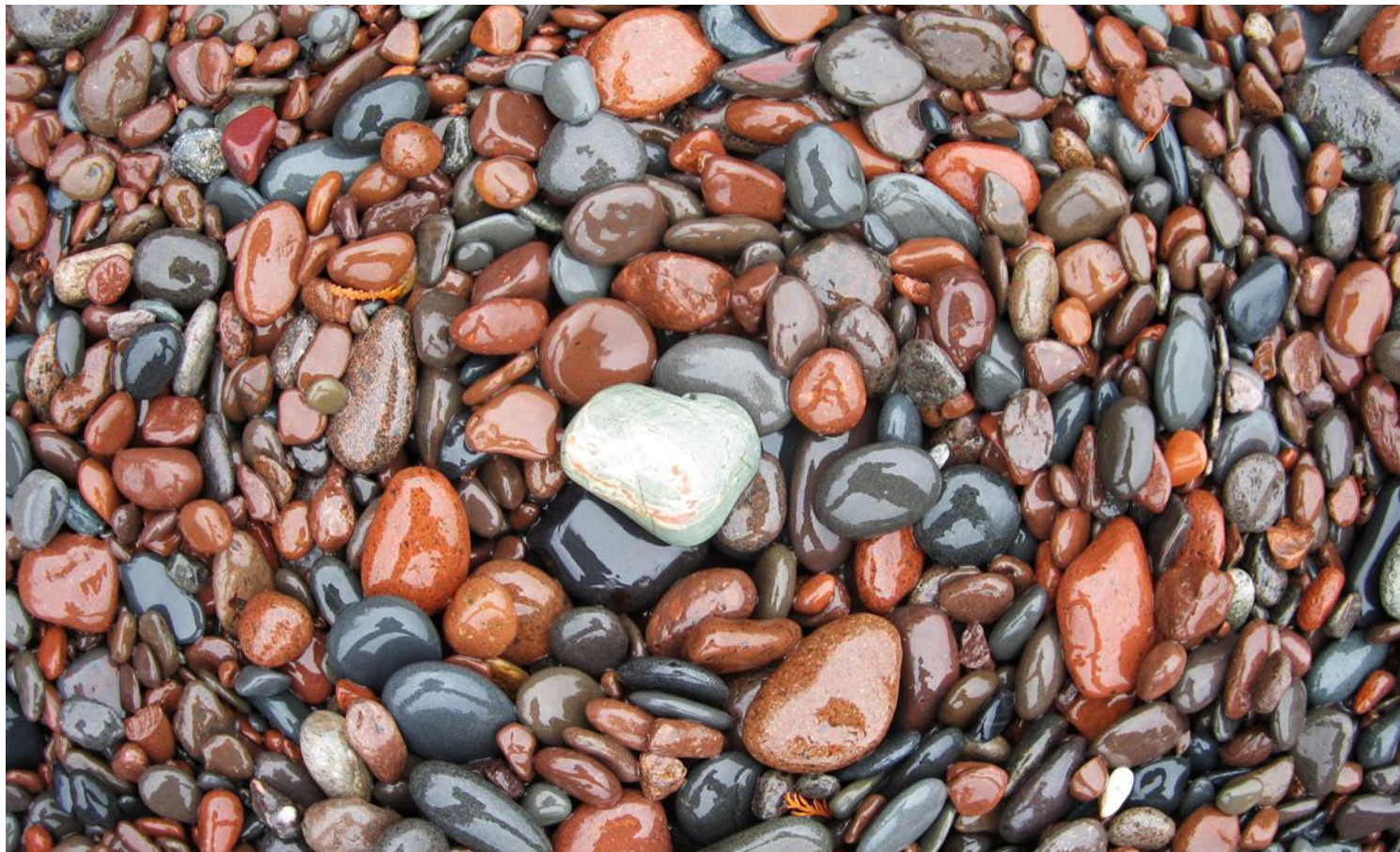
Amanda is an MFA student at the University of Utah, sometimes based in New Zealand. Her work has appeared in Bravado and other places.



**Barefoot Desert**  
**(ottava rima for daughter)**  
by Amanda Barusch

Morning clouds flame but the cold hills  
insist on shadow. Faces of indigo stone  
clutch the snow in their creases. A child's feet could still  
warm the earth, wake the meadow, and know  
the path of each skylit memory. Instead, she will  
tiptoe away from the dark mountain frown  
to dance barefoot in the desert sun  
and share honey dates with a black-necked swan.





## Fearless

by Wendy Brown-Baez

Scattered pebbles  
in moonlight, lead me back.  
Home is the place where I held you  
in the dark

held back fear  
with one flimsy curtain.

Scattered like pebbles  
my thoughts shift to the East  
where my father in the retirement  
he paid for with blood and bone  
is dazed with dementia,

desires  
the endless dark.

Beneath dark snow  
ice shifts and crackles  
as I place carefully each step,  
risk undoing what has taken

years of healing

and the surgeon's blade.

Avoiding scattered toys I pick up the baby  
change diapers and mucky bibs  
play endless games of Crazy Eights  
put brothers to bed with a story

leave them to the  
sleepy dark.

Among scattered stars find space  
to play. In the dark set wick  
to flame.

---

Wendy Brown-Baez is a writer, teacher, performance poet and installation artist. She is the author of two poetry collections "Ceremonies of the Spirit" and "transparencies of light". She has performed her poetry from Chicago to Puerto Vallarta.  
Website: <http://www.wendybrowbaez.com>



## **Into the Mystery**

by Salvatore Folisi

Perhaps you too have stumbled  
upon your own death  
unsuspectingly

have held it in your hands  
and walked into the  
mystery

the spirit of your  
eternal purity reawakened  
as you prayed to the gods

for remembrance

of your own unique meaning

in the mass of infinite  
tendrils crisscrossing  
your heart.

I cannot say anymore  
for the gods are singing.

---

Salvatore Folisi was born in Baltimore, Maryland and recently moved to Portland, Oregon. He is a writer and poet who has been published in Adbusters Magazine and Vision Magazine, as well as other online journals.





## Rooftop

by Anuja Ghimire

The peepal tree is gone  
 Its roots no longer gnaw at the base of our house  
 The trunk I collapsed on  
 When our neighbor's dog chased me-  
 The day we lay the foundation  
 Lit incense and said a prayer-  
 Is replaced by Kathmandu air  
 Rows of crows do not crowd our rooftop  
 The mother that pecked at Ma,  
 Protecting her eggs  
 Moved her nest long, long ago  
 Today, monsoon has brought in frogs  
 Through the cracks under the door

Our noses, pressed on the glass, smell the mud  
 The green waves of the rice plants touch the  
 ground  
 Nothing but pouring water moves or makes a  
 sound  
 Before the clouds part, we stay young, in bliss, at  
 heart.

---

Anuja Ghimire is a native of Kathmandu Nepal. She received her MA in literary studies from UT Dallas and edited for UT Dallas journal Sojourn. Her poetry is published in Pena International, Red River Review, Words Like Rain, Glass, Clay, and two anthologies in her native language of Nepali.





## **Capsized**

**by Gary Glauber**

Winter stole the river's primal significance,  
but his duty remained to note what drifted by.  
Smokestacks abandoned upstream were  
his silent accomplices: watching, waiting.

In the semi-still waters, he could  
see his reflection, hair silvering  
on the edges, like his father before him.  
Those same intense eyes that burned  
whenever told what to do directly,  
but now the fire smoldered far less.

The end of his youth was floating there  
in front of his eyes, the dreams carried  
by the weak current into the swirling eddy  
that might be the rest of his life.

The lone spectator contemplated  
this river of his ancestors, and skipped stones  
to escape the hard lessons before him.

---

Gary Glauber is a poet, fiction writer, teacher, and former music journalist. New work is forthcoming in *Fjords Review*, *3 Elements Review*, *JMWW*, and other journals.





## White Gold

by Robert Henschel, Jr.

you live a thousand years  
you ask no question  
you question no answer  
you die ten thousand times  
not for the war lord or the emperor or a god  
but for the white gold on the coastal highway  
it leads from Phan Rang to Phan Thiet—  
a waist high drift spreading on the southbound lane  
the second rice harvest drying in the sun  
your dalai lama and your pope  
sit in the ruins of Con Ga  
licking the wounds of the bullet pocked nave

you pray for them  
your prayer unvoiced in the moonlight  
if not compassion then kindness  
if not kindness then civility  
if not civility then white gold

---

The poetry of Robert Henschel, Jr. has been published in Lost Lake Fold Opera, Loonfeather, Guild Press, and short stories have been published Guthrie Publishing, and Kaleidoscope.





## The Colony

by Lisa Megraw

"I shut my eyes in order to see."

~ Paul Gauguin

We set out to meet the spirits,  
to hike their scented cliff-tops,  
speak their language through blooded  
moss and astral flower.

But they sang in our dreams,  
filled us like water on that little moon,  
until there was nothing  
but the cold jar of night, and us

struggling against our nakedness.  
A cooling moon, a bracelet of huts  
a few stars set against the darkest  
pool of black.

No birds. No blood orange  
sun to bite into the dusts.  
Only us, holding only words  
and enough blood in our hearts  
to carry on.

---

Lisa Megraw has poems forthcoming or recently published in The Bellingham Review, The Bitter Oleander, Third Wednesday, and others. She lives in the UK and shares her home with a three-legged rescue cat.



## Celluloid Traces

by Ralph Monday

Surreal to watch old 1940s black and white movies, to see actresses long dead move about a screen, quickened with talk, emotion. There they exist in one dimensional form though long given up to the earth or fire.

Yet, there is a living presence here, like magnetic waves recorded in rock, an energy that will not dissipate so that I wonder if this is truly illusion or another dimension where these beings lie trapped—forever

cycling through the same scene after scene, a type of film limbo where when resolution

is achieved, the exposition begins as soon as final credits roll, building like Sisyphus' rolling rock to a closing climax that never comes.

These celluloid traces, footprints in morning dew, that evaporate as soon as the projector rolls silent, reform again in an audience's mind. They live as we live. When our movie is complete, those film players cease to look back at us.

---

Ralph Monday is an Associate Professor of English at Roane State Community College in Harriman, TN., where he teaches composition, literature, and creative writing courses. His work has appeared in publications such as The Phoenix, Bitter Creek Review, Full of Crow, and Impressions.



## Gather Them

by Rochelle Natt

Gather up your onesies, all those unpaired gloves, and the loosies your grocer-father kept in a cigar box to sell for a nickel each to customers who didn't have a quarter for a whole pack of Luckies. Gather up your father, standing behind the counter, a Lucky dangling from his lip. Hold up the X-rays of his blackened lungs and why not the shot glass rimmed with the smear of your mother's Tangee lipstick? Gather up your mother from her railed bed—her stick arms, legs, crabbed hands. Kiss her fish mouth. Gather up all the times you shuddered beneath your nailed-down school desk, your hands covering your head, waiting for the flash, the blast, the melting self. Gather up the declared and

undeclared wars, all the names of the dead. Gather them up into a sack, haul them to shore, shake them out, shake them. The sea will gather them in, buoy their weight, soften their edges, mute their colors, render them opaque, unreadable, peaceful as beach glass.

---

The poetry, short stories, and essays of Rochelle's have appeared or are forthcoming in *The Iowa Review*, *The Doctor TJ Eckleberg Review*, *Stand*, *Inkwell Magazine*, and others. Rochelle currently teaches writing at UCLA Extension

<http://rochellejewelshapiro.com>





## The Firebreather Speaks of Stockholm Syndrome

by Deonte Osayande

My neck hurts from hanging on to your words  
 Everything you say leaves  
 a heavy shadow in the chimney  
 of my throat, how ashes

recall being before burning. I taste  
 cinders and cinnamon on your lips  
 until our disagreements torch  
 everything. I apologize  
 too much. I'm not sorry

enough. The damage stays with me, a singe  
 of regret on the tip of my tongue. You

won't let me go, even in your absence. I know  
 fatigue whenever I'm looking

at our old photos. I know fatigue, my voice  
 shows it, like a darkened cloud  
 billowing up a smokestack hoping someone  
 sees it long enough to remember to come take care  
 of it, even if they arrive ready to extinguish.

---

Deonte Osayande is a poet, writer, performer and instructor from Detroit, Mi. His poems have been published in over a dozen literary journals including Camroc Press Review, Prime Number Magazine, and The Missing Slate. When not traveling and performing he teaches creative writing to inner city youth through the Inside Out Detroit program.



## @ Griffith Park Observatory

by Samantha Tetangco

Jacaranda trees turn  
the sidewalk  
a snowdrift  
pink. You gather the petals  
in your palms, searching

for a bowl  
to replace your capable  
hands. At the summit,  
people stand in line  
for a telescope

aimed at a moon  
no one else can  
see. We picnic  
on the trampled  
grass. A boy, awestruck

by the city, says, I could never live

like this. Later, we wait  
for the stars to reflect onto  
a tabletop, watch a pendulum  
take seven minutes to knock

a single peg. In the planet-  
arium, the dome  
fills with the night  
sky, and I try  
not to cry. You say,

when it opens up  
like this, do you think people  
understand that this is how  
it should be. This is what  
they're missing.

---

The poetry of Samantha has appeared in Gargoyle, Gertrude, 200 New Mexico Poems, 99 Poems for the 99 Percent, and others. She currently teaches composition and creative writing at the University of New Mexico, where she earned her MFA in 2011.





## A Scoopful of Bradford

by John Richmond

The widow was so overwhelmed by the sheer number of requests- if not out-and-out demands- for a memorial service, that it wasn't until one night- when she was drunk as a skunk- and two months after he suddenly dropped dead, in Philadelphia- in front of his girl friend- did it come to her how to satisfy everyone.

She awoke with a fuzzy Wild Turkey headache but a crystal clear understanding of how she was going to proceed. In fact, she was so

determined to begin- and end- what she was now determined to do, she radically short-circuited her usual morning routine. Today, she was not going to read the morning paper or watch the morning talk shows or check her emails.

No, she went straight from getting out of bed to the kitchen, poured herself a cup of coffee, grabbed her cigarettes and went back into the dining room where she sat down at the end of the large, oak, dining room table.

"All right," she said in a determined tone then took a sip of her coffee as she reached over for an ashtray, pulled it up alongside, on



her right, and lit up a Marlboro Light.

"Let's see," she began as she inhaled, puffed- in a kind of "ten o'clock direction-" and surveyed what was in front of her. "Okay, okay," she said with a newfound intensity, "first things first."

She stood up and leaned over toward the middle of the table where she picked up the urn- yes that urn with his ashes- and brought it next to her, on her left.

"My address book," she reminded herself as she started to circle the table, looking for it.

"Ah! Got it!" she called out when she found it at the opposite end.

She picked it up and slowly- almost methodically- glanced over the numerous stacks of papers on the table.

"I know I put them, here, somewhere," she said slowly as she moved from stack to stack, looking through them, "but where are they?"

The stack that she was looking for was a mixed pile of letters and cards and emails that she received since his death was announced. To her credit, she had the foresight to keep them all together. Now, all she had to do was to find them.

"No, no," she murmured to herself, dismissively, each time she finished thumbing through a stack.

"Here it is!" she said, exultantly, once she found it.

She placed her address book on top of the stack, picked it up and brought it back around to where she was going to sit and ultimately put an end to the insatiable demands being placed upon her.

"There!" she exclaimed as she- almost roughly and insensitively- slammed the stack down at her place.

She stood there, in place, and thought about

what else it was that she needed.

"The bottles," she finally said.

With that, she turned and headed toward the basement door. She opened it, turned on the light and descended the eight stairs to the cold concrete floor.

"I am so glad that I saved them," she praised herself as she made her way to the shelving unit that stood against the far wall.

Once there, she scanned the boxes that lined the shelves. What she was looking at was her meticulous collecting- saving, hoarding, call it what you will- of all of the prescription bottles she had ever gotten over the twenty years that she has been in psychotherapy. Yes, they were all there, every last one of them.

She nodded and reflected on them- the boxes and their contents- empty bottles that formerly held medications with names like Zoloft, Ativan, Xanax, Prozac and Valium.

A radiant glow swept over her face and she immersed her psychological and emotional energy into the meaninglessly indulgent task of selecting one box- but which box- amongst the many.

"Oh, well," she sighed, "what does it matter?" She reached up to the second shelf and took down the second box. "Just perfect," she laughed, "just like our twenty-two years of marriage- second shelf, second box."

She made her way back up to the dining room where she pulled up a chair next to the chair that she was sitting in, placed the box on the chair, sat down, opened it and took out a number of bottles.

"Now," said half-said and half-announced to no one but herself, "time to get started."

She picked up the first bottle and looked at it.

“So, who should you go to?” she asked in a thoughtful way.

“Yes, yes,” she said, affirmatively and without reservation, “his brother, Billy.”

She opened the bottle, reached over, took the lid off of the urn- and stopped.

“Ah-h-h,” she uttered hesitantly, “how am I going to do this?”

There was a lengthy pause while she pondered the problem of how she was going to transfer an appropriate amount of ashes from the urn to the bottles.

“I need- a scoop!” she concluded, now having solved the first part of her problem.

“But, where am I going to get one- do I even have one?” she asked, acknowledging the second part.

Her mind ran through the options of the number of scoops that were available to her; measuring spoons, the scoops that came with Iced Tea, Tupperware, Cat Litter, Miracle-Gro- until it finally hit her. “I know,” she told herself, stood up and walked back into the kitchen.

She walked over to what was her coffee cabinet, opened it, and took down the Maxwell House can, peeled off the plastic lid and took out the scoop.

“This will do the job” she said and headed back to the living room.

Then, for the next hour- or maybe even longer, she actually lost track of the time- she smoked, drank coffee and went through the memorial requests, giving each requester a portion- “a scoopful of Bradford”- that she deemed appropriate in accordance with who and what they were to him.

There was his sister, his nephews, nieces, cousins, friends and relatives back in his old hometown; long-time associates in Washington; retired acquaintances; navy buddies; old fellow

frat members- a lot of people.

As the bottles began to accumulate, she realized that she would still have to go out and get some sort of mailers, but that could wait until tomorrow or the next day. What was important, today, was to parcel out the remains and be finished and done with this part of the task.

Eventually, she was down to the last person that she could think of- the girl friend- Hollie.

“Yeah, Hollie,” she voiced to herself, loud enough so that someone- anyone- anywhere in the house would have heard. “You little tramp,” she continued in an increasingly hostile and affected tone, “you’re going to get your share of- ‘the love of your life!’”

With that, the widow took out one last bottle, opened it, then picked up the ashtray and- with her fingers- carefully brushed the contents into the bottle. Once she had determined that the bottle had “an appropriate amount of remains,” she sealed it up, marked it- “HOLLIE”- and pushed it aside.

“There you go, bitch,” she hissed at the bottle, “go bury the bastard.”

Finally, being done, she pushed her chair away from the table and stood up.

“Time to get a drink,” she ordered herself in a self-rewarding way that had serious undertones of retributive satisfaction, “I’m done with this- rest in peace!”

---

John Richmond has wandered and lived in all sorts of places ranging from a small fishing village (population 400) to New York City. Recently, he has appeared in From the Depths, Flash Frontier (N. Z.), riverbabble, and Lalitamba.



## **Hanging On**

photography by Kristy Johnson

Growing up and attending University in Bemidji, Minnesota, Kristy Johnson has developed a love of the outdoors. Kristy has been honing her skills in photography and writing by attending many classes, developing a rich style in both.





## **Copse**

photography by Louis Staebble

Louis Staebble lives in Bowling Green, Ohio. His photographs have appeared in dislocate magazine, Driftwood, Iron Gall, Paper Tape Magazine, Petrichor and Tupelo Quarterly. He has been influenced by a range of artists including Ansel Adams, Dorothea Lange, Rene Magritte, Georgia O'Keeffe and Jackson Pollock.



## Not So

photography by Louis Staebler





**The House Across the Way**  
photography by Louis Staebler





## **Fear Not**

photography by Rohnda Monroy

Autism. That one little word can bring your whole world crashing down around you. Or so it was for us on a warm spring day in 2004 when that word was used to describe our sweet baby boy. Since then, we have had some dark days. Days shrouded in confusion, anger and fear. But my heart does not dwell in this darkness. They are just moments that we pass through on our way to a strength and beauty that can only be birthed in the trials of this life.

We find hope and a deeper love and understanding than we ever could have known without this challenge. Our faith in God has grown deeper as He walks with us through the dark storms, always whispering to our hearts, "Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes I will help you, I will uphold you with my right hand." (Isaiah 41:10)

This is a photo of our son, Jonah, and depicts our daily walk. Yes, some days are dark but there is always light at the end of the tunnel. There is hope and joy and beauty to be found if we only stop and look for it and count blessing instead of tears.

---

Rohnda Monroy. Married to the love of my life David Monroy. We have 3 beautiful kids, 2 of whom are on the Autistic Spectrum. I work part time as a Food Photographer for a Tennessee based diet & nutrition company. Love to take photos in my spare time of life and beauty that is always there if you look for it. And when I feel inspired I blog about Faith, Food, Autism and Art on my website.

Website: <http://www.rohndasue.com>



## Inner City

painting by Margaret Karmazin

My work has appeared in various galleries and shows in Scranton and Bucks County, PA, Binghamton, NY, Susquehanna County, PA, and on St. Thomas and St. Martin. My illustrations and paintings have appeared in SageWoman, regional publications, The MacGuffin and several other literary magazines.





## Lake Reverie

painting by Margaret Karmazin



**Late Morning**  
painting by Margaret Karmazin



**Meditation**  
painting by Margaret Karmazin



## The Pond

painting by Margaret Karmazin





## Diwali

painting by Margaret Karmazin





## Shadow Walk

painting by Margaret Karmazin

## Peter Vircks

as interviewed  
by William Ricci

Minneapolis-based musician, composer and arranger Peter Vircks is a founding member of the modern jazz group Moveable Feast and the Peter Vircks Quartet. He is also a member of Rhythmic Circus and part of their current production Feet Don't Fail Me Now.

In 2004 he was accepted to attend the Banff International Workshop in Jazz and Creative Music where he was mentored by Bill Frizell, Dave Douglas, Mark Turner, Han Bennink, and, Clarence Penn. He is also a 2007 American Composers Forum Subito Grant recipient and subsequent adjudicator. Vircks is credited as a sideman on dozens of recorded albums and has performed music on several nationally syndicated commercials and independent films.

Peter's debut album, What You Believe is True, was released in 2014.

More information and tour dates can be found at: <http://www.petervircks.com> including November 21st at Jazz Central Studios in Minneapolis, MN.



**SPR:** When and why did you start playing the saxophone?

**PV:** I started playing the saxophone the summer before fifth grade, in 1984, when kids in our school district were offered group lessons. I was tested on mouthpieces for all the band instruments and was told I might do well with any of them. I made all the right sounds and had a previous musical background. Other sections were filling up so I was steered toward the saxophone. My folks bought a King Cleveland alto for me.

**SPR:** Were there any other instruments you tried or wanted to learn?

**PV:** Well, I'd already been taking piano lessons at age five and had been singing in the church children's choir for a few years at that point. I even bought a guitar with my own money from the Montgomery Wards catalog when I was six for twenty-six dollars. I never really figured out how to play that crummy model at all. The strings were too high off the fret board. Somewhere there is a super-8 film of me smashing it to bits.

**SPR:** When you played in high school, were you thinking or planning for music to become your career or focus?

**PV:** I played in band until the middle of freshman year in high school. There was a compulsory marching band and pep-band component for all concert band members. Now, I was a skateboarder and that was my



Identity. Image conformity, groupthink and sport ball were already things I questioned.

Dressed to the eyeballs in thick blue polyester uniforms, one of my older section mates was reprimanded by the director for something she didn't do. I noted the injustice and immediately voiced my concern, which somehow earned me a parent-teacher meeting. In the past, I also had been scolded and punished for things I did not do by the same director. I was a great student with great grades, but in the meeting I was given the choice to leave band or stay on. I left. It brought my mother to tears, but, except for her tears, I was not conflicted and it felt like a weight was lifted. I loved music but not the stress of band room authoritarianism.

By that point, I had earned high marks in the state saxophone ensemble competition and I really liked playing the instrument, too much to just abandon it. So I sought out private instruction and kept playing.

When senior year rolled around, an independent music study class was offered as an alternative to regular study hall and there was also the extra curricular Jazz band. I joined both because I was really getting into figuring music out. I loved playing along with the radio and jamming with schoolmates and friends, but improvising was still walking around an unfamiliar living room with the lights out.

It was impressed on me around that time

that, while choosing what you'd like to become, first determine if that which you'd like to become, as an end, is a good thing. If it is, then aim in that direction, forget about the end, and start walking. So I did, kind of.

**SPR:** How did you come into jazz?

**PV:** The word "jazz" is problematic. There are issues historically with cultural appropriation, etymological uncertainty and its creation as a commercial label too constrained to corral the many species of music it spawned in the twentieth century.

The word, to many non-musicians, conjures images of swiny-dingy, lindy hopping, black and white footage of the bygone, post WWII era America with lots of flash and razzle-dazzle. Big band jazz-hands and couples dance-off competitions. Or the opposite: milquetoast, synthetic, "smooth jazz" with its pantyhose saxophone solos replete with the obligatory super long high note that was probably born in an elevator of some department store in a suburb of Los Angeles. I generally don't identify with either set.

I still use the word "jazz", but sparingly, I guess. Mainly because there is no good alternate word, no term has arisen to take its place. When I say I'm an "improviser", I'm met with blank stares or folks assume I'm talking about "noisy" free-jazz. Free-jazz is a part of my picture, but only a part. When I say Black American Music, folks say "hip-hop or R&B?" When I say America's Original Art Form, they say "baseball?" or "water fowl

decoys?”

Technically, I was introduced to the music in my school’s sixth grade “Jazz Band”. My first improvised solo in a concert occurred in seventh grade. A girl I liked gave me a necklace after that concert which blew my mind. That was a sweet reward for a terrifying experience. Enter Pavlov’s dog.

But really, I think the kids in that middle school band were just doing what they were told for fear of punishment, going through the motions. There was no cultural or artistic context, no clear explanation of the origins or direction of the music and no examples of the authentic music were ever played for us, in my recollection. If there was, it was lost. We just sort of clunked along not able to absorb the academic description of swing as described by our director, who resembled Lawrence Welk’s elf in gum soled Clarks, bless his heart.

At the same time, as a skateboarder in the later 80s we were few, marginalized and harassed. Petitioning the city council didn’t get us a small outdoor area set aside for skateboarding. So, behind the businesses, in parking lots and alleys where folks didn’t mind us or couldn’t find us, we improvised over the paved context. We honed skills in our bag of tricks to perform over different obstacles. Much later, I came to recognize how akin to musical improvisation skateboarding is, like both of these skill sets use the same pathways in the brain. There are just as many ways to skateboard over a cement-parking block, as

there are ways to blow over a C7#9 chord. The freedom comes in developing an array of options. In the moment, exciting new possibilities present themselves as we improvise using the things we’ve practiced.

**SPR:** Was music part of growing up?

**PV:** I grew up in a house filled with the music of John Denver, Crystal Gayle, Neil Sedaka and Roger Whitaker. My older brother was a metal head, blasting it from the basement. In those pre-CD days, the early days of MTV, I could wade through what I heard on the dueling pop radio stations without getting too excited about much. But interest peaked with songs like Axel-F and Rokit.

When Herbie Hancock’s Future Shock album was released, I was way into break dancing. Hancock’s Rokit resonated with that dance esthetic, but I could never have known then the depth to which his creativity had already affected American music in previous decades. I was fully insulated. No one I knew probably had any knowledge of that sort of stuff, most suspiciously, any public school music teachers I’d associated with.

In 1987 I bought my first ever compact disc, from the grocery store. It was entitled The Best Of Jazz Saxophone Vol. #3 because, hey, that’s the instrument I play. It was then that I realized I could relate the physical vibrations and sensations I got playing the instrument to historical examples and how they got their tone. It also started to feel like I was coming into a secret knowledge. A real

world of music and style apart from anything knowable in family and current friendships, let alone school band. Many of my early impressions of this CD persist. Eddie “Lockjaw” Davis had this tearing, earthy and wide sophistication I liked. Zoot Sims was impossibly fast, lilting and fluffy. Illinois Jacquet felt labored, woody and stuffy yet bouncy and funky. Gerry Mulligan (on soprano) was beautifully complex. Sonny Stitt was squeaky and sharp, but really real.

There were two record stores within biking distance from my house. One had previously been a Volkswagen dealership and the other had a huge sousaphone-like contraption on the sign. I would buy Fugazi, Meat Puppets, Primus, G.B.H., U2, Spyro Gyra, The Cure, Blue Oyster Cult, and Sting among other artists. Some were misguided choices, others not so much. Fugazi hit me in a positive, anti-discriminatory, anti-racist sort of way, but the Sting album *Nothing Like The Sun* really struck me. The compositions and lyrics had gravity for me, but what slayed me was the saxophonist. I identified with that. With his sound. I didn’t know until years later, after listening to a lot of Branford Marsalis, that it was him on that record.

Another ear opening experience I had was while practicing to the radio. I would regularly pick a random station and try to play along with whatever was on. I’d stumble through everything from *Dust In The Wind* to *Life In A Northern Town* to *The Rose* to Phil Collins - country, commercials, classical. One day, I turned the FM dial all the way to the left.

I knew that if the cloud cover was just right and the wind was blowing in the right direction I could get reception from a college station some sixty-five miles away that had weird music programs. Through the static, I heard bassist Jaco Pastorius. My mind was blown. I had never heard anything like it. Like getting stabbed in the brain by some urgent liquid metaphor.

More and more, I strayed into the “Jazz” section at the record stores. I “discovered” more favorites: Stanley Turrentine, Dexter Gordon, Stan Getz, and Joe Lovano. Also, Michael Brecker, who I then thought looked like a jerk on one album cover, made me furious that that guy could play like that, may he rest in peace.

**SPR:** Were there other careers or interests you explored?

**PV:** My High school had one of the best graphic design and printing press programs in the area. I loved drawing, photography and creating imagery, so I enrolled throughout my four years there.

The instructor, Mr. Carl Loverude, a great teacher, hoped I’d find my way into that profession. After all, it was one of my top two picks for a career. Upon hearing I was considering a direction in music, he gave me some words of wisdom: “In graphic design, it’s what you know. In music, it’s who you know”. Those words haunt me on my bad days.



I was torn between those career paths. So, alone, I picked a penny out of my pocket and flipped it...Tails. Music.

I ended up at UMD in the Jazz Studies program instead of Stout University for graphic design. Life would have been so vastly different had it gone the other way. My wallet shrugs when I think about it.

Life would also have been vastly different had I stayed there, at UMD. I left after a year and a semester. The education was not lacking, but the scene. And the promise of more gig opportunities back in Minneapolis seemed to trump any girl or band or degree trying to keep me there. I transferred to the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis for a short while.

There were these two days in 1994. I was living near the U of M with one of my best friends, in his house, and I was working at a neighborhood grocery store part time after classes. I was gigging a little around that time. My friend and I had a bad falling-out regarding something trivial about hardwood floors, so I moved out of his house. Then the director of Jazz Studies stood me up the 6th time for an audition. I was fed up with the institution and that was the last straw, so I quit school. For other reasons, I dumped my girlfriend and quit my job, then moved back in with my folks. Toughest two days of my life up until then, but it was a clean break.

Through the nineties I'd had a few different day jobs. For a while, I was Geovista driver and navigator for Geospan Corp. manning the

first vehicles for filming 360 degrees while driving with GPS navigation plotting, for what was to eventually become Google Maps' Streetview. I was also a furniture mover, fishmonger and trucking coordinator for a non-profit.

**SPR:** Who are your influences? What impact did they have on your style?

**PV:** I don't have a single greatest influence, but a short list of saxophone greats I admire, in a rough chronology, might look like this: Dexter Gordon for his tone and phrasing, Stan Getz for his lyrical invention, Yusef Lateef for his tone and world influence, Stanley Turrentine for his quintessential sound, Lou Donaldson for his rhythmic taste, Wayne Shorter for his compositional vision, Joe Henderson for his unique melodic approach, Bennie Maupin for his lean phrasing, Michael Brecker for his harmonic virtuosity and viciously devastating technical ability, Joe Lovano for his husky sound and rare cleverness, Branford Marsalis for his beautiful fluidity, Courtney Pine for his vibrant stamina and Kenny Garret for his core sound and soul notes.

**SPR:** What music are you currently listening to?

**PV:** Lately, I've been listening to Vince Mendoza's albums Epiphany and Nights On Earth, Robert Glasper's Black Radio & Black Radio II, Donny Hathaway's Extensions Of A Man, Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, Tedeschi Trucks Band, Wayne Shorter's Allegria album

and Brian Blade's Mama Rosa.

**SPR:** With your involvement in Rhythmic Circus, concerts, recordings, travel, how do you balance career and family life?

**PV:** It's tough. I usually justify time away from my wife and kid by relating to my Dad who has been a truck driver since the late 50s. He was gone a lot when I was growing up, but he always came home. I grew up with his absence not being a big deal. It is sort of shaping up to be like that with my family now, but my business now is not as consistent or lucrative as my father's was then, leaving my wife right now with undue burden. I'm in no position to turn down work and I've even been doing part time labor to fill in the gaps between gigs. I remain optimistic though.

Air travel has lost its novelty. My wife travels for work as well and we've done pretty well with our pact to not both be gone at the same time, but it has happened where we're practically high-fiving on the concourse after my flight arrives at the airport and I'm handed the kid so she can leave on different flight.

**SPR:** Do you encourage your children to play music? What do they think of your playing?

**PV:** My son started piano lessons when he was five and there are keyboards, a guitar, recorders, drum set and percussion at his disposal around the house. He also knows how to use the record player. His tastes currently lean toward rock and pop music, but he's only ever said good things about my

music. He even told me last week, very matter-of-factly, that it wouldn't be a bad idea for him to play the saxophone when he's older.

**SPR:** What do you hope your legacy will be?

**PV:** I hope my legacy will be that of an effective communicator of compelling, unique, transcendent, uncompromising musical ideas where beauty trumps base convention.



photograph by Terry Greenwaldt  
<https://www.facebook.com/terrygreenwaldt.3>

# Stone Path Review

AN ARTISTIC JOURNAL OF PATHS THROUGH IMAGES AND WORDS

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