

Ponderables All Year



A Birthday Book of Original Aphorisms

by Alan Harris

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Ponderables can be read daily on the Web at:

Thinker's Daily Ponderable
www.alharris.com/ponderables

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Introduction

This birthday book collects some uncollected thinking of mine from the past 15 years, and also provides you with a space beside each day of the year for collecting the uncollected birthdays of your friends and relatives. This book won't become obsolete each year because the days of the week are omitted.

The ponderables on these pages have been appearing daily on the Web since 1996 in a page called *Thinker's Daily Ponderable* (www.alharris.com/ponderables). This birthday book contains a full year's collection of the Ponderables from that page.

As you read these ponderables, you may detect a random admixture of deeply serious, unabashedly wacky, exploringly spiritual, and rhymingly poetic observations on life. The ones you need will stick with you, while others may fade away like July fireflies—at least until you open the book again to add another birthday or look one up.

Each month's opening page contains a seasonal poem from my Collected Poems entitled *Noon Out of Nowhere* (on the Web also at www.alharris.com/poems), and I've added some of my photography for a splash of visual interest. For more photography, you can visit my Gallery at www.alharris.com/gallery

I hope you will be enjoying these ponderables as long as you continue observing birthdays—and may your own birthdays be many.

Alan Harris

January



Frozen Fantasy

My first breath outside
on a winter morning
speaks a frosty sentence
and drifts off.

When my hand sticks
to a cold pipe,
I have joined the winter club.

When the sneaky wind
finds a crack in my coat,
I feel the grip
of zero.

Winter is,
if anything,
a surprise in ice.

January

Ponderables

Birthdays

1 The New Year is like a perfectly clean new house into which we all stagger with good intentions and muddy boots.	
2 “Opposites attract” makes for stable atoms and amazing marriages.	
3 Unity is the safety net forever beneath twonity.	
4 What makes a writer write is what makes a breather breathe—alternatives are severely limited.	
5 Drinking from deep springs won’t make you deep, but digging may.	
6 We all have free will. In fact, our will is so free that we often have little control over it.	
7 No separateness, no crowds.	

January

Ponderables

Birthdays

8 When a new door opens, its hinges may be lubricated by your tears.	
9 Beauty is nearer than your eye, more distant than the faintest star.	
10 Buy now, and forever comes free.	
11 Well-timed silence is the purest speech.	
12 If it isn't cycles, it's waves.	
13 Competition feeds the outer person, while cooperation feeds the inner.	
14 I cry out into the silence to let me hear it. No reply but silence.	

January

Ponderables

Birthdays

15 Poets and prisms make rainless rainbows.	
16 If you would hear the song of the infinite, listen quietly through the ends of your toes.	
17 Fate remains wonderfully poised when gamblers tempt it.	
18 To demand good but not to give is a recipe for personal stink.	
19 Your real name can't be spelled or pronounced—only lived.	
20 Human motives are so complex that a judge can only be a poet of justice.	
21 Who can talk the flower out of blooming?	

January

Ponderables

Birthdays

22 “With our amazing product you will grow healthier every year until you die in perfect health.”	
23 Many who will sit inert before a TV all day will also honk in slow traffic.	
24 When an error is made, the stupid blame, the conventional cluck, and the awake learn.	
25 Work, and the world works with you. Shirk, and the world ignores you.	
26 Everyone contributes to society—some by serving as horrible examples.	
27 Opportunity breeds opportunism breeds misfortune breeds opportunity.	
28 Anything you hide is perfectly safe until found.	

January

Ponderables

Birthdays

29

Reversals for the body are rehearsals for the spirit.

30

Flattery and fishing give hooked gifts.

31

Infatuation is love so intense, beautiful, and brief as to be unachievable by the secure.





February Dreams

February seeds silently recall all,
As if winter's death were a silky dream,
And the influx of the new sun's warmth
Were the spark and flash of remembrance.

March will bring the quickening sprouts,
April the lush early growth,
May the flowering of procreation—
And then February dreams will fade away.

How many memories must there be
When seeds reclaim their hold on warming soil?
How many seeds are there? How many lives?
In the stillness of my heart I hear: "One."

February

Ponderables

Birthdays

1 Carry your enthusiasm and it carries you.	
2 Leaving a few stones unturned in a marriage or a minefield can be downright healthy.	
3 A society lady's best snub is no match for that of a summoned house cat.	
4 A house has square feet; a home has footsteps.	
5 You get the most free financial advice from people who are in your pocket.	
6 Nobody scolds like a coward.	
7 Whoever first said "Hey, man!" was to become the most widely quoted dude in modern times.	

February

Ponderables

Birthdays

8 Over time, pleasure and pain go together like tick and tock.	
9 Stronger than most armor are motives clean and seen.	
10 When a man's thinking is airtight, his mouth usually leaks.	
11 A stitch in time saves the theory of relativity.	
12 Chaos you shall always have with you, and also overcontrol—try love.	
13 Opposites attract, opposites butt heads, and opposites make up.	
14 Philosophies are a paradigm a dozen, but if they don't acknowledge love, they fall away like leaves.	

February

Ponderables

Birthdays

15 The ability to fly high on life's trapeze doesn't mean one is any good on life's tightrope.	
16 Music is evidence that beauty, mathematics, and time all live in the same neighborhood.	
17 Ask not whether they'll hire you; ask what good they're doing for folks.	
18 When wealth speaks, greed listens.	
19 When you're down in the dumps, incoming advice becomes excruciatingly abundant.	
20 If not by love, then by law.	
21 Moment: an infinitely expandable unit of time, used often in situations of love or airline delays.	

February

Ponderables

Birthdays

22 Even with its hassles, life seems to be the best thing they've come up with yet.	
23 Occasionally necessity takes its jackhammer to our expectations to make way for what the chief architect really wants.	
24 People you have to interrupt so they can see your side, won't.	
25 The wealthy feel wise, and the wise feel wealthy.	
26 Getting your hair clipped tends to make your secrets fall out of your mouth.	
27 To marry for happiness may end up stretching both words a little.	
28 If every discarded corporate goal in America could be changed into a muffin, world hunger might be ended.	

This page has been intentionally left blank in honor of all who don't know where they are going but who keep on walking anyway.



Night Thoughts

Sleepless tonight inside my skin and bones,
I feel that life must be a cruel curse—
Begun with squall, cut off with pain and groans,
A little joke told by the universe.

Why am I here? What accident of fate
Breathed life into this form I occupy?
What kind of God would bother to create
A fragile human life, then let it die?

A voice within my heart says, "Mend your ways,
And light inside your consciousness will gleam.
Your bleakness, like the earth, delays dawn's rays,
But love and hope will end your desperate dream.

"Depression fills agnosticism's night,
But soon your soul must rise and follow light."

March

Ponderables

Birthdays

1 A thought between two bites of a sandwich can change your destiny.	
2 The road to hell is littered with the manuscripts of church sermons written late on Saturday.	
3 Killed time gets even.	
4 The cause of anything is no less than everything.	
5 Every new human being is an impossibility become inevitable.	
6 In truest love, giving and taking become moot.	
7 The meek shall inherit the earth—as long as this is really okay and like everybody’s done with it and everything.	

March

Ponderables

Birthdays

8 At the end of a day, is there one less day in your life or one more day in your life?	
9 Brilliance without altruism is a cut flower.	
10 Growing old means throwing all abandon to the winds.	
11 Intolerance leads to suffering leads to investigation leads to compassion.	
12 Free choice is everywhere; freedom from consequences is nowhere.	
13 Friendships with others bring us heaven before heaven.	
14 Brilliance uses fine words; character, pauses.	

March

Ponderables

Birthdays

15 Anything you can get away with, you can't.	
16 Morning Prayer Now I wake me up from bed; I thank the Lord I'm still not dead. The Lord declined my soul to take For reasons which remain opaque.	
17 The freshest ideas are also the oldest.	
18 This is the first minute of the rest of your hour.	
19 Good giving brings good gifts, and well-thinking fills the air with well-being.	
20 If roses are art, then thorns are critics. The soft choose heart; the hard, analytics.	
21 Nothing deepens character like a firmly balanced dilemma.	

March

Ponderables

Birthdays

22 Rumors are disagreeable to many; but then, so is the truth.	
23 Silence is golden, like wedding rings only much scarcer.	
24 You can't kid hate.	
25 Desperation gives Cupid quick wings.	
26 Lecture: a verbal dance between voice and attention, sometimes accompanied by meaning.	
27 Love isn't fussy, but it works best where there is a universe, attraction, infinity, and time.	
28 We are most strengthened, over time, by our weaknesses.	

March

Ponderables

Birthdays

29

An opportunity without opportunists is as rare as a cowflop without flies.

30

Consensus usually belongs to the first one who dares to ahem and summarize.

31

Businessman's Prayer

God grant me the ingenuity to escape the things I cannot change,
money to change the things I can,
and lawyers to know the difference.



April of the Spirit

In this April Sunday
there is pure spirit
scenting all the air
like a sweet candle.

Spirit runs through me
like light through a prism
and splashes all my glands
with a rainbow of loving.

Spending spirit is a joy
and a joke, for no end
is there to it—
as well spend the sea.

When my brain tunes into
spirit's primordial hum,
there are no surroundings
but the starlit cosmos.

I sing into the center of being
whose bud bursts open
and flowers into a fragrant chant
for April eyes and ears.

Amen says all, sings all
that ever will be sung—
begins and sustains and ends
our euphonious zodiac.



April

Ponderables

Birthdays

1 It's folly to destroy truth, whatever its costume or yours.	
2 Need we be terribly surprised at the shortcomings of a world that is substantially run by the personalities who dominate meetings?	
3 The Kindest Safe Thieves will fail, try as they may, to steal any money you've given away.	
4 A suture in time saves the future.	
5 Precious stones iridesce; precious people irritate.	
6 To find big mistakes, look for big egos.	
7 Perhaps the only infallible way to detect a lie is to be the liar.	

April

Ponderables

Birthdays

8 It takes a long time to hurry, but now comes quick as a thought.	
9 The kindly man in the mountain cave spoke but briefly: "Search for a way to stop searching."	
10 Tears talk to heaven, and heaven answers.	
11 Poetry works best when you ignore the words.	
12 To find order in chaos, stop looking there.	
13 Find some friends you like, or be satisfied with the friends who find you.	
14 If we only have enough presence of mind to reach out, someone may put just the right thing into our hand.	

April

Ponderables

Birthdays

15 If life isn't eternal, who cares what is?	
16 Much knowledge is belief wearing a top hat.	
17 To nurse a few grudges is forgivable if you try not to breast-feed them.	
18 Since last century, computers have been enabling business offices to proceed much faster from one emergency to the next.	
19 The last word is never the last word.	
20 Living it up usually takes far less time than living it down.	
21 Can a fountain be robbed?	

April

Ponderables

Birthdays

22 For every question conceived in the mind, an answer resides in the heart.	
23 Indignation that is righteous is usually your own.	
24 Truth can be stranger than fiction, but poetry can be stranger than either.	
25 Grief cooks a nourishing oatmeal for the soul.	
26 People remember your generosity far longer than your accumulation.	
27 There's nothing new beneath the sun, but luckily, what's old is fun.	
28 Visualization can be important to one's advancement in a large company, especially the ability to see clothing on naked emperors.	

April

Ponderables

Birthdays

29

Where would a poet be without an angst to grind?

30

“All of our operators are still busy helping others. We appreciate your patience. In fact, we take it to the bank.”



May Opening

May is most
too awfully grand
for this birdsung
treebreezed
dewdazzled
man.

All winter I worked
freeze-dried and
to the world dead
in my closed-up
house

until this annual
now, when May
gives me to
inhale vigor's gist
from its generous
air.

Today I've opened
windows and doors
to let livingness in
and release husks of
flies and moths and
thoughts.

My breathing replete
with May's mixed balm
of aromatic everyness,
I've fallen again fully
open.



May

Ponderables

Birthdays

1 So much depends on love that you'd think more people would use it.	
2 Those on the take give up what those on the give take out.	
3 Leave the past behind you, but if parts of it get back in front of you, ask them why.	
4 The tongue inside the brain speaks awfully bravely.	
5 A grandmother's love could light a large city.	
6 There is nothing in this world but everything, and it can't all happen in a day.	
7 The teeth of adversity grow directly behind the smile of fortune.	

May

Ponderables

Birthdays

8 The wall that protects you also confines you.	
9 When you're reading a book about Zen, you're not reading a book about Zen.	
10 As surely as a bud, given water, will become a flower, the office sycophant, given power, will become an autocrat.	
11 A loving thought is deeper than the night sky.	
12 In the dear school of experience, gentleness is our finest achievement.	
13 Each person is a jewel polished by trouble.	
14 Doubt fueled by compassion resembles faith without pretense.	

May

Ponderables

Birthdays

15 Consequences teach what parents and teachers failed to.	
16 But for your past calamities, your virtues might be fewer.	
17 When the irresistible meets the immovable, a telephone rings somewhere.	
18 Never let a confident person fold your parachute.	
19 "Smile" is an anagram of "slime"—and also a path through it.	
20 You can give more than you have, but you can't take more than there is.	
21 A yacht is a cheap substitute for walking on water.	

May

Ponderables

Birthdays

22 Anyone who likes to compliment finds ready listeners.	
23 A newborn's first thought: "Now what?"	
24 Our commencement speaker revealed at length his firm grasp of the obvious.	
25 Good people die, and good people let them.	
26 When you work for yourself, both of you work.	
27 To measure quality is the ultimate fantasy of the quantitative.	
28 Blunders create as many opportunities as does brilliance.	

May

Ponderables

Birthdays

29

Opportunity knocks, but the inevitable just comes on in.

30

Too many first-chair players spoil the orchestra.

31

A strong person has weak moments and is strengthened by each one.



Suburban Reverie

Watering the flowers,
I happen to think of
all the famous authors
working on their newest
books.

Mowing the yard,
I wonder how the
great mathematicians
can prove their theorems
even with computers.

Sitting in my front yard,
listening to the songs
of cardinals and wrens,
robins and blue jays,
I wonder at the amount of
practice an opera star
must submit to.

How about the columnists
and cartoonists and
astronauts and painters,
all being
something?

Here I am,
sitting in my front yard,
in an aluminum lawn chair,
staring at my suburban home,
supporting and
supported by a nice family,
wondering,
wondering.

I'll water the flowers a little more.



June

Ponderables

Birthdays

1 Anybody who thinks you walk on water, later won't.	
2 Love is the key that unlocks the door of the visible to reveal a magnificent invisible.	
3 Opinion is wisdom in diapers.	
4 A dewdrop on one blade of grass makes oceans moot.	
5 When light is shining within, no darkness from without can penetrate it.	
6 The ethically blind see themselves everywhere they go.	
7 Many would like to become great, but being alive is a hindrance and being dead is distasteful.	

June

Ponderables

Birthdays

8 Everyone, even vegetarians, can benefit by occasionally eating crow.	
9 We spend our first forty years making mistakes, and our next forty years making more mistakes.	
10 Friends bend where fakes break.	
11 Wherever there's new ointment, can a fly be far away?	
12 Moderation in all things, including moderation.	
13 Walking barefoot in grass makes your understanding tingle.	
14 Killing is a decidedly one-sided pleasure.	

June

Ponderables

Birthdays

15 Friends have love without vows, faithfulness without reason.	
16 The palate can murder the colon.	
17 The light never goes out, but sometimes we need to go in and fetch it.	
18 How can we be sure that infinity is all there?	
19 The larger the city, the shorter the tempers.	
20 Adversity can engender achievement, whereas aimless comfort is a living cemetery.	
21 Among the laziest are some of the busiest.	

June

Ponderables

Birthdays

22 Honesty costs only one ego.	
23 The impossible is just around the corner.	
24 In a selfish society, the word “free” is the most successful pickpocket.	
25 All of life is a near-death experience.	
26 A teardrop is a liqueur to the future.	
27 Those who choose bravely learn deeply.	
28 Earth is unsure footing and wealth is insecure, but how you’ve loved and given will deathlessly endure.	

June

Ponderables

Birthdays

29

Weak warriors kill bodies; strong warriors win hearts.

30

Freedom, to the aimless, may seem a jail.





July Brushstrokes

gradual sliding low of Sol...

flashings out when trees allow...

sidewalk bathed in fading light...

yellow-green this muted hour...

whitening sky holds twilit breath...

shadows paint each passing trunk...

cicadas sing “six weeks till frost”...

hints of night inspire bird choirs...

all scent all sound all inner yes...

July

Ponderables

Birthdays

1 Exits from the freeway of truth begin at a small angle.	
2 The kindest way to make chicken soup is to leave out the chicken.	
3 Clocks accurately tick while time slips away like a black cat in the night.	
4 We can't really break the universal laws, but if we ignore them, they'll break us.	
5 Nothing matters, and so does everything.	
6 A friendship can go no deeper than the confiding.	
7 If there were a drug to reduce ego, would it sell?	

July

Ponderables

Birthdays

8 The intelligent are wary of the smart.	
9 Two invisible antagonists animate nearly every board meeting. They are quality and quantity.	
10 The brain is a museum of the past, the heart a garden of the future.	
11 Without roses, thorns would be out of business.	
12 He traveled the world, carrying vast unexplored territories within.	
13 If life gives us a load, a great honor's bestowed. Life knows, if we don't, that we can when we won't.	
14 Dogs offer you humility. Cats invite it.	

July

Ponderables

Birthdays

15 Do: a verb sprinkled liberally into airline announcements to create the illusion of intense caring.	
16 After 50, the best thing about a birthday is having it.	
17 Pain doesn't enjoy you, either, but it's got a job to do.	
18 "You have mastered it, my disciple. Next week we will explore the sound of one hand NOT clapping."	
19 If a cat could speak, it probably wouldn't.	
20 After a motivational seminar you feel like new frosting on an old cake.	
21 Walk where your feet are.	

July

Ponderables

Birthdays

22 The hell you feel is the one that's real.	
23 Why can't we not worry by not wanting to worry?	
24 Every person we meet is both a wonderland and a curriculum.	
25 Hell provides a room for people who assume, which gets some ventilation, but my, what a population!	
26 Kind acts never die, and what is kind in yourself was waiting for you.	
27 Beginnings whoop; endings weep.	
28 It's easy to be critical, but it's even easier to be bureaucratic, which is why bureaucracy is always ahead of its critics.	

July

Ponderables

Birthdays

29

To know who you are, observe what you do.

30

Wisdom from words fades away, but wisdom from anguish remains and remains.

31

A sure way to learn is by ignoring good advice.





Humid Evening

I finger gently the meshy steel diagonals
in our manufactured backyard fence
as lightning bugs dazzle a slow-dance
in the swimmy summer-wet air.

The therapeutic pendulum of a breeze-driven
willow branch entrances me, and merely glancing
at our telephone pole mutely poking into the yellow
setting sky flares a human fragrance in me.

Grasp me by the arm and try to feel
my feelings if you can, as flimsy and confused
as the evening sounds reflecting about our
house and joining the silence of grass.

Praise the Lord of Emptiness as evening's first
star suggests its way through the stratosphere,
retinas all over the city tickling with its improbable
light. Breathe the whole slippery sky with me.

Kings have died failing to acquire a splinter of our
well-being. Look at the grass and the fireflies and the
fence, all swimming in a soup of quaintly offered
love from some source unknown despite knowers.

August

Ponderables

Birthdays

1 Reality is what's left to us after all of our failures to find it.	
2 One inevitable can overturn thousands of impossibles.	
3 Godspeed can leave devilish messes.	
4 Cute twice, cliché forever.	
5 It is efficient to be patient about several things at once.	
6 Even when things are all in place, they're very close to being out of place.	
7 Said love is maybe; done love is yes.	

August

Ponderables

Birthdays

8 Sometimes we get an urge to do some great thing, and we'd really do it if someone could just tell us what it is.	
9 An ounce of good will is worth a pound of prevention.	
10 The goose that lays the golden eggs gets taken out to lunch a lot.	
11 The bad news is that you are the slave of your past. The good news is that you are the master of your future.	
12 You know you're getting old when you notice that your first name is being given to babies again.	
13 Gossip is a time-filling voodoo that uses words for pins.	
14 History is kept exciting by humanity's continuous influx of fresh ignorance.	

August

Ponderables

Birthdays

15 Computers won't ever become minds until they can cry—and mean it.	
16 Taste makes waist.	
17 Infinity is the quickest shortcut to the unknown.	
18 If such great people have labored so diligently for so long, why is there still so much more to do?	
19 Creativity leads to crisis, which leads to creativity.	
20 American work ethic: busy is good, frantic is excellent, and burnt-out is sublime.	
21 Our deepest wound may heal to become our greatest strength.	

August

Ponderables

Birthdays

22 We are poor in what we think we own.	
23 All roads out are blocked by this rockslide in your mind? All roads in await.	
24 A school without soul is a busy-box.	
25 We are often blinded by what we can see, or paralyzed by what we can do.	
26 Random silences deepen a conversation and add force to an argument.	
27 Isn't life intrusive?	
28 We develop a fondness for people we help.	

August

Ponderables

Birthdays

29

An opinion without self-interest is as rare as self-interest without an opinion.

30

Quiet is to noise as silence is to quiet.

31

Sooner or later one's purpose in life comes pushing up through one's mistakes like a delicate flower blooming in a trash heap.





An Inward East

To calm a care or soothe an anger storm
you pause to breathe your vital inside sun
and, richly quiet with its steady glow
of coremost tenderness and flooding peace,
you reinterpret body's aching bones
as levers placed for mystic ministry,
propelled and infinitely smiled upon
by forces which, when tapped, give tenfold strength.
You find your earth eyes lidded from the room
and focused now on lightened higherness.

In light we are as one, beloved friend.
How can a doubt or fear feel more than mere
when in and up we set our inner sight
to see a splendor further east than east?

September

Ponderables

Birthdays

1 There is joy ahead but much work. There is work ahead but much joy.	
2 Rainbows are around us all the time, but it may take a very dark cloud to make one appear.	
3 Nice days are more made than had.	
4 Law of Kitchens: Two people working in a kitchen will be in each other's way about every 20 seconds. Corollary: Every 10 seconds if spouses.	
5 For later flowers, if we but endure, misfortune makes a good manure.	
6 Ignoring people's promises doubles pleasure when they're kept.	
7 One person lies, two people conspire, three incorporate.	

September

Ponderables

Birthdays

8 A car gets you there—beyond which, it's metal clothing.	
9 A guru said to his gathered disciples: "There are two kinds of people: those who don't know, and those who don't know that they don't know." A disciple asked, "How do you know?"	
10 To refuse free goods and sold enlightenment can prevent a lot of complications.	
11 Evil is kinetic stupidity.	
12 The moon and computers remain similarly aloof when confronted with anger.	
13 Life brings situations in which we feel like Jonah or Noah, who were each stuck inside something that moved slowly, smelled bad, and couldn't be steered.	
14 Until we understand silence, we only partially understand words.	

September

Ponderables

Birthdays

15 A quarter for expertise buys a dollar's worth of peace.	
16 For the endless commitments we make, our days contain too few infinities.	
17 Each human life is like a new symphony heard for the first time. It can't be understood or fully appreciated until after the final cadence.	
18 A library contains millions of pages of maybe.	
19 When it is time to cry, you do. No volcano is more irresistible than a sobbing whose time has come.	
20 The flowers never charge the bees and pea pods don't invest their peas but bipeds have such minds for fees that if they could they'd sell the breeze.	
21 The first shall be last and the last shall be first, while the mass in the middle opine.	

September

Ponderables

Birthdays

22 When prophets turn to profits, wisdom turns within.	
23 If unpaid overtime isn't slavery, it's certainly funny money.	
24 Is the universe a mindless collection of spinning dirt, or does it know what it's doing? That is the question of the ages. If the former, why are we so intelligent? If the latter, why are we so ignorant?	
25 Wisdom is knowledge dampened with tears.	
26 Stumbling blocks make wonderful starting blocks for the next race.	
27 For every day that you hang on a cliff, you get a wider view of life.	
28 A kind act is worth a dozen beliefs.	

September

Ponderables

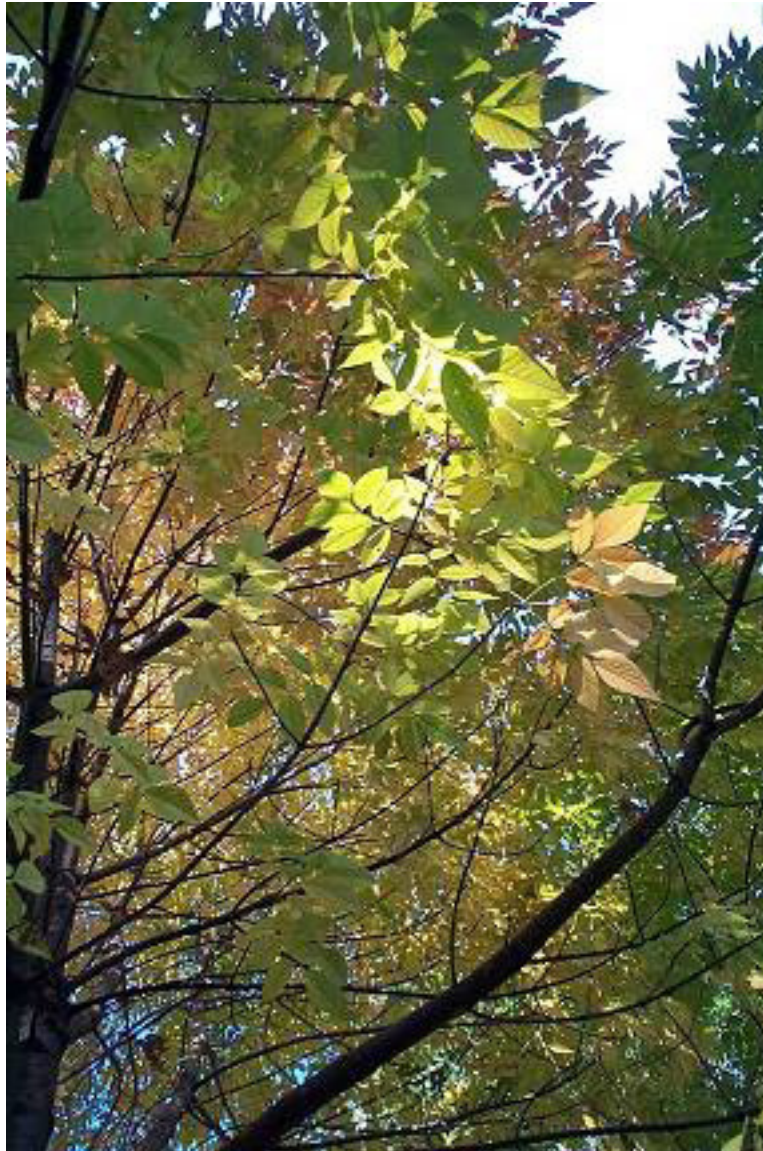
Birthdays

29

Love and gravitation keep the universe interesting.

30

Mankind's three deepest imponderables are infinity, eternity, and stupidity.





Autumn Glimpses

Autumn's puffy wind
tickles my maple silly—
the leaves die laughing.

Lifelong summer's leaves
flutter down through fall's abyss
to safe root places.

Through deep leaves we tread,
seashore sounds in mid-forest
rasping at our feet.

October

Ponderables

Birthdays

1 Each life is a leaf that knows little of the whole tree.	
2 A secret, if whispered carefully, will spread faster than the ten o'clock news.	
3 To find out is human; to find in, divine.	
4 About half of humanity have ego problems, while the other half seem proud not to have any.	
5 The spouse who loved the caterpillar may hate the butterfly.	
6 Progress entails thinking outside of the box to create fresh boxes for the unimaginative to think inside of.	
7 Our enemies teach us lessons that our admirers never can.	

October

Ponderables

Birthdays

8 Calendar: a device for scheduling the unpredictable.	
9 Many newcomers in hell are soon put to work designing phone menus.	
10 Sooner or later we get what we want, which would be fine if we only knew how to want correctly.	
11 Eternity isn't something we wait for—it's what we breathe.	
12 Evolution is apparently endless on both ends.	
13 We carry the sky in our lungs and the earth in our wallets.	
14 In an important business meeting there will typically be more faces than people.	

October

Ponderables

Birthdays

15 When you've been patient long enough, you get to be patient some more.	
16 The mind discovers buttons that the heart refrains from pushing.	
17 Kilter is rarely noticed until something goes out of it.	
18 Precisely where you're not getting is where you may not be giving.	
19 Earth life is a subset of poetry.	
20 Ecstasy may have to sweep the floor tomorrow and hate it. Joy works long and lightly.	
21 Tomorrow holds rewards for thoughtfulness today distilled from painful errors in endless yesterday.	

October

Ponderables

Birthdays

22 Love isn't a question of multiple choice.	
23 Moods enter children like breezes through open windows.	
24 The silence in an elevator full of strangers is different from that in a forest on a summer evening. The former silence screams of crowded separateness, while the latter whispers of sequestered unity.	
25 Compete, and everywhere, competitors; cooperate, and everywhere, culture.	
26 Irritation is a universal poison for which forgiveness is a universal antidote.	
27 When truth needs a voice, silence lies.	
28 Heaven isn't far—in fact, it's hugging us.	

October

Ponderables

Birthdays

29

Even perfection has its limitations. For example, a perfect square can hardly roll.

30

Profound blessings move slowly because so much moves.

31

A lighted candle has no fear of the dark.





A Hidden Sky

There is a sky
below the ground.

I saw it today
through puddle windows
along my street.

Big sycamore leaves
were floating in it
like balloons becalmed.

Trees were towering
downly up
beneath my feet.

If streets contain a sky,
do you and I?

November

Ponderables

Birthdays

1 A deed of love pulls a hidden string that makes a bell in heaven ring.	
2 The unforgiving are the most likely to do the unforgivable.	
3 When one sits to meditate, the mind may at first sound like a jukebox in a cathedral.	
4 The small angers the small.	
5 Each ballot is a bullet unshot.	
6 I, the thinnest word in the dictionary, easily slips into most of our thoughts.	
7 After formal education has dazzled and dis- mayed, root errors bring on root learning.	

November

Ponderables

Birthdays

8 A sharp tongue cuts itself.	
9 Every day is more evidence of forever.	
10 There is no freedom from freedom—it endlessly compels us to do as we choose.	
11 A good friendship, like a good river, comes back together after hitting a rock.	
12 Ulterior motives may be invisible, but oh, the smell.	
13 Charity and software piracy begin at home.	
14 Pain kindly wakes up stupidity lest it slumber through eternity.	

November

Ponderables

Birthdays

15 See with your heart—it never needs glasses.	
16 Thank God if your car breaks down oftener than your body. Some bodies are lemons.	
17 Knock, then realize you've always been inside.	
18 You may wish on a star, but you get what you are.	
19 Plants reach out for the light, while humans reach in.	
20 Higher education trains your mind to feel good later by making it feel terrible now.	
21 The heart is the best advisor, and also the nearest.	

November

Ponderables

Birthdays

22 We age in years, but we mature in moments.	
23 A dangerous place to stand is in the way of someone else's highest calling.	
24 You are not what you do, but what you do anyway.	
25 We depend upon each other for our independence.	
26 Undone tasks quickly have children and grandchildren.	
27 If contentment is enlightenment, then a cow is Buddha.	
28 Where love is the root, gratitude is the flower.	

November

Ponderables

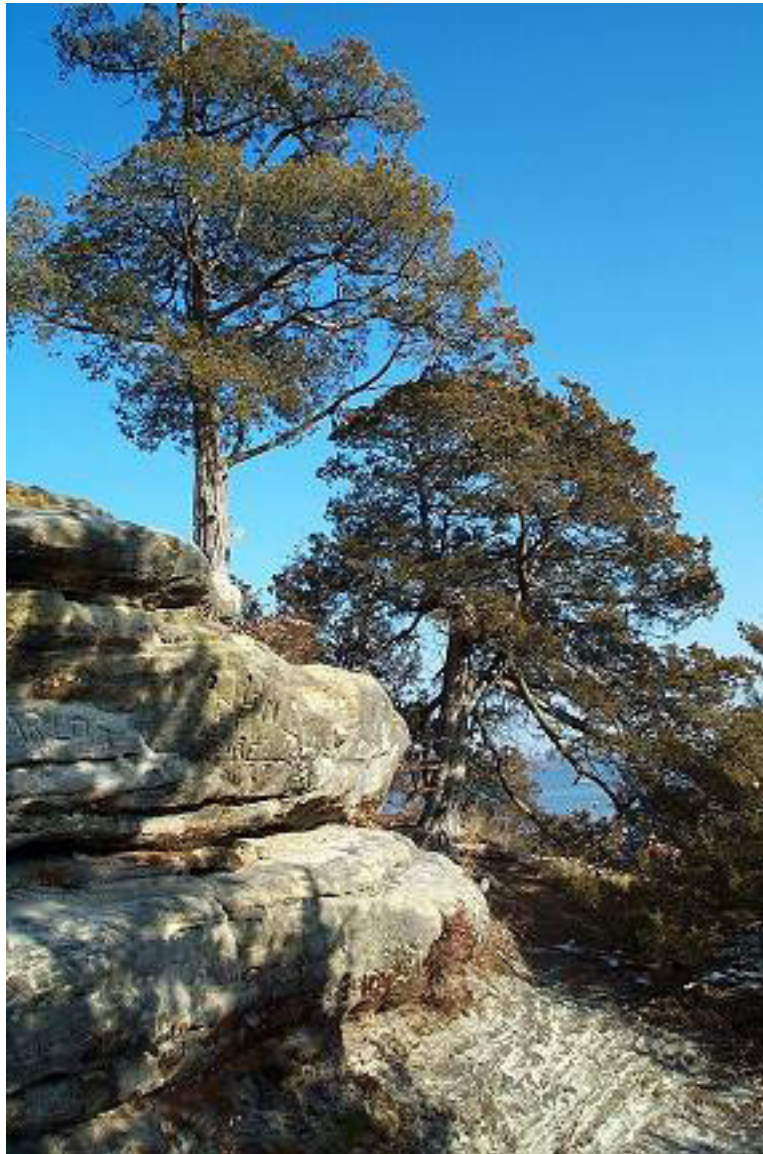
Birthdays

29

Months come disguised as days, and swindle us sweetly of years.

30

With every beat the heart is jumping for joy, though the mind may be doubting and pouting in heedless gloom.



Fireplace

By the fireplace tonight
we are helping the fire warm us.
These flames are as old as pain
and as new as tomorrow's journey.

While the logs listen,
we think of stories to tell
that crackle and sizzle
and laugh into the air.
We confess old secrets
and fresh hopes, surprised
at the fire's way with truth.

What warm gift is here?
If fire were aspiration,
would its color differ?
If fire were catharsis,
would it not still crackle?
If fire were love,
would its flames fail to dance?

By the fireplace tonight
we and the flames are one.



December

Ponderables

Birthdays

1 Business office survivors learn to distinguish bluster from need, and anxiety from importance.	
2 Truest gifts cannot be wrapped.	
3 Scrooge no longer hates Christmas, now that he's acquired it.	
4 Seeing believes, wisdom knows, and love is.	
5 What God has put asunder, let no man paste together.	
6 Time is all we have, and most of what we don't have.	
7 Words can be bombs, balloons, or communion cups, depending on what we put in them.	

December

Ponderables

Birthdays

8 As Santa comes down the spine from the head to the heart, everything seems a gift.	
9 The heart loves unity. The mind loves diversity. The body settles for flattery.	
10 Christmas and a minimum universe both ask for only one star and some generosity.	
11 If your guru charges, retreat.	
12 With leaders we build; with rulers we cope.	
13 Affectation is wealth's poverty.	
14 As you take a step, the step takes you.	

December

Ponderables

Birthdays

15 Authority without love is a universal poison.	
16 Happy are the wantless, whatever they have or lack.	
17 Each person is a statue of his or her soul.	
18 Like milestones on a journey, our mistakes show us right where we are.	
19 The main trouble with living as if there's no tomorrow is that there almost always is one.	
20 Crying makes an inner rainbow.	
21 To find eternity, lift up the minute.	

December

Ponderables

Birthdays

22 Aging has acquired a bad reputation, but it's a wonderful way to stay alive.	
23 Guilt is a little prison that keeps you out of big ones.	
24 Our gift isn't that we have, but that we see.	
25 Does the Star of Bethlehem not shine from every eye?	
26 We learn so much from some of our mistakes that we keep on repeating them.	
27 Gifts given give gifts.	
28 Good forever gathers what evil blindly scatters.	

December

Ponderables

Birthdays

29

In a nutshell, be a nut.

30

New Year's resolutions divide the resolver into master and oppressed, and history usually favors the oppressed.

31

Infused and confused within the unfolding Cosmic Aim, we seal our past in glass and welcome, as all there is and will be, our future.





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*, *Carpet Flights*, and *Fireflies Don't Bite*. 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. Alan and Linda relocated to Tucson, Arizona in March, 2003 to live near the younger two generations of their family.

