

## A Potpourri of Poems

**Gary Ten Eyck**

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*Poems focus on shared experiences with honest and openly expressed feelings.*

Gary Ten Eyck's often musical poetry collection, *A Potpourri of Poems*, chimes from the opening note.

Family themes dominate, starting with the acknowledgement to the poet's daughter. Poems span more than three decades and focus on relationships, including those with a large circle of friends and "mostly loved" animals. The narrative voice is distinctive, including some off-color language and slang, along with surprising word choices like the repeated "yer" in "Body Language" and "reverize" in "A New Year's Thought."

Couplets extend the songlike quality of the poems, which flow most naturally in poems like "A Face." Painterly images evoke palpable sensations of the "sun-warmed sand" and "tender shell, / Of a soul," working most effectively in brief stanzas.

Themes include observations about engineers' frequently overlooked contributions and meandering thoughts about crustaceans. Many have a confessional tone, including "A Time of Stress" and "Humility." Some are registered in Spanish, including "La Mar y Mi Alma" and "La Vida Dulce," limiting their audience more. Others, like "The Overture to 'The Crabs,'" are especially memorable for how they poke fun at their own shortcomings, with self-referential lines like "Enough of this dribble and endless rhyme."

Poems assume a variety of viewpoints, reflecting personal as well as imagined perceptions. Those about animals are particularly creative, including "The Saga of Pepé the Puppy," which covers the dog's firsthand encounters with danger on the street before he finds refuge in the safety of a home. The section on crabs is overly lengthy, covering every season, various holidays, and some surprising scenarios in "The Marriage of Tippy and Chicano" and "The Valentine Crab."

Poems about family members focus on shared experiences with honest and openly expressed feelings. Vivid descriptions include those about treasured lunches in "Fruit Time" and the indelible memories of those who have departed this "earthly lair," a repeated phrase in poems including "To Rick." Recollections of specific people—like those of a friend, Sandy, with "laughing eyes and dancing smiles"—lead to genuine and enduring tributes, poignantly recalling people who were particular sources of joy.

A simple gray line drawing of a sailboat comes behind many of the poems before a photograph of an unidentified sailor appears. Both require guesswork as to their connection to the poems until late in the book.

*A Potpourri of Poems* is a personal poetry collection about the highs and lows of one man's life.

ANDREA HAMMER (September 5, 2018)

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