

# BIDING TIME

H. GENE MURTHA

**BIDING TIME**

Selected Poems 2001-2013

by: h. gene murtha

## DIRECTIONS

Let us walk for a while. Bring along the pick axe, spade and knapsack hanging in the shed. You will find them on your right just inside the split barn door. Walk through the trellis in the rear garden, it is the trailhead that leads through the forest. Be careful, there are roots to your left sticking up from an old pin oak-- I don't want you to spill me, well, not yet. Follow the trail until two paths merge, then stop. Take the pick and break up the hard pan. You will find ribbons of clay and sand. Mix them together with the shovel to create loam. Add the ashes from the velvet bag that you will find inside the knapsack, this will improve the soil too. If you feel inclined to say something over my remains, then, that is fine, but it is not important, since you have done enough.

It will be spring soon. Already, you can hear the chickadees.

recycle day  
a washed out worm  
in the rain puddle

~o~

if i could  
start all over . . .  
pink lady slipper

first warm day  
her calloused feet  
welcome the clover

we lean  
into one another's  
broken parts  
a pair of thrush  
rebuild their nest

for **Inky**

deep in thought  
the pitcher plant  
wide open

tripod the great egret blinks

day moon  
    the blue  
in a dragonfly's wing

eastern bluebird even i've known love

an iris  
trapped in a vase  
like love  
there are things  
we never wanted

pond shimmer  
there not there  
grebes

knapsack  
and cane pole  
i search  
the pond's edge  
for an answer

bog lilies . . .  
the right words  
escape me

gnats swarm up  
my raised arm  
twilight haze

starry night  
reeds bow  
in a loon's wake

first light . . .  
slow to rise  
a phoebe's tail

people change  
like the color of  
a bunting  
i feel at peace  
when i'm alone

dusk  
an empty beer can  
taps the dock

brushing off sand  
I walk what's left of  
the pine dunes  
my time here passes by  
like the birds overhead

twilight  
a seahawk sinks  
into the sound

between waves--  
i scratch hortensia  
into the sand

for **Kimberly Hortensia Anderson**

it's all  
i ever wanted. . .  
fireflies

split rail fence  
a bobolink rides  
the thistle

July 4th  
the rise and fall  
of a cicada's song

biding time . . .  
spit drips down  
the thistle

summer haze--  
a crow flaps free  
of the asphalt

licking his balls  
for luck he says  
the relief pitcher

noon whistle  
the candy bar  
snaps in two

Indian summer  
the road crew plays catch  
with a hardhat

poolside  
again she orders  
*sex on the beach*

Indian summer  
a bee bounces around  
in the beer can

July 4th--  
small talk over beer  
with a redcoat

before i knew  
a thing about war, or  
of a bee's sting  
i longed to be held  
between your breasts

my stride  
begins to slow. . .  
chrysanthemums

ancient trail  
footprints fade  
with the dew

all the things  
that pass me by  
. . . dandelions

subway wall . . .  
a poem about  
    butterflies

dreary day--  
my neighbor takes down  
the hummingbird feeder

how useless  
these hospital gifts  
for a stillborn. . .  
a withered leaf,  
a fallen feather



dawn  
caught in a dewdrop--  
the empty swing

the gleam  
in a child's eyes--  
starlings shift directions

morning chill  
a child's shadow  
moves thru mine

it's all there  
inside this letter  
bamboo wind chime

when you think  
you've heard it all--  
brown thrasher

talk of divorce  
two starlings  
back to back

harvest moon  
chopsticks circle  
the rice bowl

now that  
you are gone  
here i sit  
on the front stoop  
petting a dog i hate

dating site  
the woman with four daughters  
doesn't want drama

nothing works  
not even a smile  
tonight  
three women walk  
thru my cigar smoke

thumbing thru  
a romance novel  
at a yard sale  
i scan the sentences  
highlighted in yellow

getting drunk  
while i think of you  
who almost lived  
i cut down the tire swing  
then the oak it hung from

drunk  
lying in my  
own piss--  
from the bedroom  
my son's voice

harvest moon  
the prayer beads  
worn smooth

burnt field . . .  
i search the clouds  
for a friend

for. **Bill (William J. Higginson)**

quiet pond  
a stone turns  
in my palm

least bittern . . .  
i hold the paddle tight  
against the current

flapping from the pond  
a V takes shape  
    twilight chill

cancer ward--  
a get-well balloon  
in the trash

shooting star--  
father's ring  
slips off my finger

first frost--  
the curved mitten-leaf  
of a sassafras

Sunday morning  
reading the obituaries  
calling daddy  
the same names  
Sylvia Plath does

in my pickup  
I look through the rearview  
snagged by a pine oak  
the same garbage that  
Hilary Tann writes about

just as  
i pull myself from  
gutter to curb  
all things dear to me  
can be found in a swap

cobblestones  
we talk about  
the old days

## GLOVE SIZE

first exam  
i ask the proctologist  
his glove size

second exam  
i get a prescription  
for hemorrhoids

third exam  
my favorite position  
no longer my favorite

fourth exam  
an empty bottle  
of ExtenZe

~\*~

even now  
decades later  
i wait  
on the tire swing  
hanging in the elm

for **Rachel**

an unnamed ancestor hanging from the yardarm

moonlit walk  
again she asks me  
her first name

when i was a child  
grandma sang to me  
in gaelic. . .  
today i cling to words  
i never understood

Gettysburg- -  
the children pause  
to watch a dove

fresh snow  
the things we do  
no one speaks of

sudden chill. . .  
he slips into  
his daughter's bed

for **Marie (Trez) Therese**

hard frost  
a dumpster's lid  
slams shut

the sound  
of a broken bottle swept  
across asphalt  
like the cry of a child  
you have given away

for **Katherine Cudney**

hard frost--  
not even a crow  
breaks the silence

for **Elizabeth Searle Lamb**

new moon  
an old woman speaks  
of the emptiness

dreary day  
a black walnut  
gnawed white

matinee the black and white war newsreel

taking me out of the war the war

hawks hover--  
the view of calm seas  
through a gunport

Memorial Day  
a layer of dust  
covers the urn

Berlin Wall  
a smooth stone  
in my pocket

if purple  
were my color . . .  
twilight snow

snowed in . . .  
fire wraps  
around a log

sharing love  
with another child  
i count  
the different shapes  
of each snowflake

waxwings  
exchange rose hips . . .  
Christmas morning

six years  
presents under the tree  
still wrapped



## BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED

Christmas is such a joke every year:  
approaching middle-age you'd think  
that I would read the text of the  
package before purchasing something  
and include the correct size batteries  
for each present. At day break, I rush  
to get dressed, brush my teeth, put on  
a baseball cap to hide my bed-hair, hop  
in my pickup and rush to the local WaWa  
with a list of all the battery sizes that  
I need, before our child's face grow long  
with disappointment.

dim light. . .  
in her nightstand drawer  
a cold vibrator

~\*~

forty-six years  
writing my name  
yellow in snow

i sold everything  
except my navajo cross  
so precious  
this god i hold dear  
the same god i gave up

first warm day  
the derelict's  
yellow tie

sober  
she asks me to  
come home  
i pierce a badger's claw  
then hang it from my ear

morning sun--  
fish scales glisten  
in the otter scat

dawn  
the glen  
. . .widens

snap of a twig  
the egret's neck  
    extends

morning dew  
i trace my son's  
    lifeline

spring  
the pause before  
she pulls a sapling

fishing  
where my brother stood--  
twilight chill

spring rain  
a child's ashes  
mix with clay

a sandal  
bounces off  
jetty rocks  
i think of you  
who almost were

spring mist--  
a mallard paddles  
through our stillborn's ashes

first warm day  
a hermit thrush  
pumps its tail

first light  
I pretend to shave  
my son's lathered face

for **Derek Michael**

steady drizzle  
strand by strand  
a robin's nest

first warm day  
a wheat penny lands  
heads up

early May--  
an oriole draws me  
up the tree

just before the splash the osprey

harlequin duck  
    i hold my breath  
    between each dive

my finger  
traces the edge  
of her lips  
around the corner  
a new adventure

on the loveseat our first kiss from the dog

balmy breeze  
her panties fall off  
the clothesline

now engaged  
she still blames the dog  
for farting

my lean bows  
the split rail fence  
a meadowlark  
riding the timothy  
whistles me home

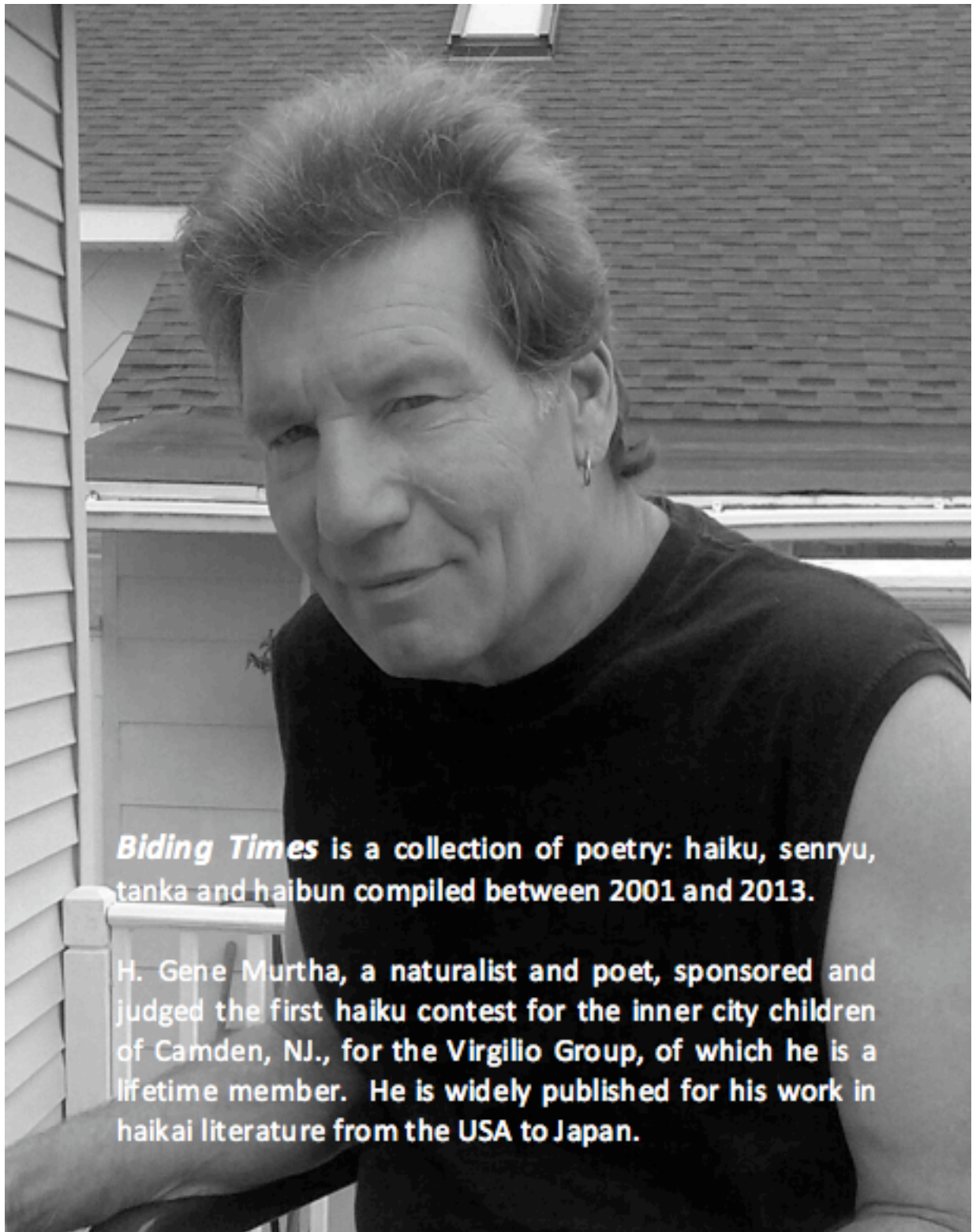
wild asters. . .  
all those times  
i wanted change

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(Not included:

dawn bumps the Jesus fish

& the redhead with the matching polka dot dress)



***Biding Times* is a collection of poetry: haiku, senryu, tanka and haibun compiled between 2001 and 2013.**

**H. Gene Murtha, a naturalist and poet, sponsored and judged the first haiku contest for the inner city children of Camden, NJ., for the Virgilio Group, of which he is a lifetime member. He is widely published for his work in haikai literature from the USA to Japan.**