

Paean

It is on this occasion that I offer
To pay tribute to the things I admire
And honor and respect with all my might.
There are several such things, you know,
And I hardly know which first to cite.

First, I must acknowledge my parents
Who formed me out of their love
One for the other and gave me life.
It wasn't an easy thing for them. to do
Then in those years before the great Strife.

Yet they did and for my sister and I
There was always plenty of love
And a roof above and food for all.
They gave to us the zest of scholarship
And the pride to stand alone, and tall.

Then, there were my teachers, who
Never complained about my abilities
They just allowed me to grow and study.
And they offered a means to reach my goals.
When I failed, they were still there for me.

Always encouraging, seldom disparaging
Always available for consultation and help.
I never thanked them before; this I regret,
But I now say to ail that are here to hear,
These are true heroes, who I'll never forget.

I had a wife once, and I caused her much grief
And I allowed that grief to consume me until
I had only anger and bitterness, sick in my heart.
Yet she loved me, as I had loved her, and now
I know that she was stronger; she let me part.

She taught our children so very well the things
That she had been taught, the sparkle of dew
In the morning, the beauty of the hummingbird
And the joy of a rainbow and the sunset's glory.
These things she did so well, with a loving word

My country stands for liberty and opportunity
And it has given me much, asking in return
So very little, it seems, and yet all around me
I read and bear of what is wrong and not working
But look at what we have and the way we can be.

I do not understand why we must always disagree
When we are all but simple beings on the same
Journey through life. I know that this also lends
A zest to living, so even not understanding, I give
Thanks for all those who their diverse ways attend.

So I give these words of thanksgiving and praise
For I'm truly thankful for the things I've done
Able to go and see all the places I've seen and
For the places I will yet see and the things that I've
Yet to do and the deeds that still await my hand.

- *Paean*, © Leonard Yarbrough, 1997