

*Words From  
The River*

*Poems by  
James Dalton Byrd*

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Deer River Flow

## Introduction

Originally, I intended to write a book of poems only about Deer River Flow, my friends there, and the surrounding area. I failed. The idea began when a line for a poem came into my mind... “words from the river.” So many poems and ideas come to me while I enjoy Deer River in my kayak. I thought I would write a poem about Deer River and give it the title: “Words From the River“. But, as it usually works out, those words had their own idea of where they belonged.

Several people have asked me how a poem comes into being or what leads me to write something. An attempt to explain the source of an idea or inspiration will be in a section following the poems in this collection. However, there are some poems that trick the poet into writing them or that take form with no explanation. The poem on the facing page was written as I was substituting for a literature teacher at Central High School of Carroll County. The students were given an assignment to write a poem, so I decided I would write one while they wrote theirs. It seems to lend itself to the object of this introduction.

## A Poem's Way

A poem can find its way  
with thoughts softly falling.  
Nudging words into play,  
a soul to souls, calling.

Words drift from dream's realm,  
all silently singing.  
A poet at the helm  
guides each to its meaning.

A poem can rise by force,  
from terror, or from dread.  
It can take its own course,  
demanding to be read.

So great, you know it is,  
when, in spite of his pride,  
the learned poet is  
just along for the ride.



De Bars Mountain from Deer River Flow

## **Siren Borealis**

Come with me...

to where Dianna's Bow last touches De Bars Mountain  
and where loons sing of their love.

Come with me...

let the kayaks glide into valleys where legends live  
and the great forest hides her secrets 'neath robes of green.

Come with me...

on a quicksilver path across coldwater blue  
to where tall trees whisper their primal stories.

Come with me...

and let morning find you drifting in wonder  
amid water and trees set ablaze by a rising star.

Come with me.....

## **A Poet Speaks**

She stands before us  
to open her heart  
so that we are given  
new vistas within ourselves.  
She becomes vulnerable  
to her own words.  
Words winding around her,  
giving quick flashes  
of who she is.  
A sacrifice that  
makes those words  
greater in meaning,  
tightening the webs,  
and pulling her in  
to the soft trap  
of herself.

## Coffee

Jake, Joe, Java the Hit...  
Tar, a cup of road kill...

A good old friend  
to a traveler,  
to a soldier.  
To a preacher  
or a whore.

Help on the late shift  
for the doctor,  
for the nurse.  
For the welder  
and the cop

Comfort in the cold  
for a hunter,  
for a farmer,  
a fisherman,  
or a bum.

Max,  
Grind,  
Liquid road patch...  
A cup of coffee.

## One Step Down

Draft beer,  
chess boards,  
and Kerouac cool.

Cerebral graffiti and  
a Robot-in-Drag juke box  
bubbling out fifty years of good jazz.

A virtuoso burger flipper  
destroying the laws of physics,  
making gravity play the fool.

On the restroom walls,  
the musings of poets  
and philosophers...

overwritten since,  
by lesser bards

and now  
closed.

Soon to be  
apartments.

## **Short List**

Rainy day.  
Simple soup.  
Good friends.  
What more?

## **An Unfortunate Word**

No is such an  
unfortunate word.

Opportunities are lost  
when it is left  
to stand alone.

So many hearts ache  
when it rushes out  
on solo flight.

It is too short  
to explain itself.



Peach