



Harold "Hal" Deane Bissell
September 19, 1921 - December 7, 2022



Who will be the ones who remember me -
Who will remember when I have gone?
Will they be those whom I have kissed and loved?
Will they breathe a sigh for me?

Will those with whom I have crossed wits remember?
Will the acrid charged gatherings be forgot?
Who will be the ones who modify an action
Because of me?

Will all my fire and exhortations be forgotten?
Will my love and lust for life not flower
In some receptive heart?
Pray some one of you remember
And pass some of me on!

- Harold Bissell
August 8, 1943

Crossing the Bar

Sunset and evening star,

And one clear call for me!

And may there be no moaning of the bar,

When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,

Too full for sound and foam,

When that which drew from out the boundless deep

Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,

And after that the dark!

And may there be no sadness of farewell,

When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place

The flood may bear me far,

I hope to see my Pilot face to face

When I have cross'd the bar.

- Tennyson (1889)

Hal was a prolific writer of poetry, one of his lifelong passions. He wrote about nature, the stars, life, and, frequently, about love. The following poems are a small sampling of his poetry, which he generated over eight decades:

Advice

You are a human candle
Not lit until you touch the sky!
Let your thirsty soul
Be a wick that flames
From star-fire rushing by!

Living

Today is always a tomorrow -
Once was, is, and shall be, now
an eternal running and seeking,
a truth-harbor, in a silent sea.

Confusion

Liquid laying, flowing gently-
Smoothly gliding o'er a plane-
Ripples and wondering and wavering
When the plane leads to sphere!

Physical

Laughing, the sea-air
Lifts high its bosom,
Giving itself to a conqueror Star.

Fragments of cloud-clothing
Pass from their bodies,
And sweet and clean and smooth
The air-sea is Celestial!

Values

I jeweled my finger tonight.
I sat at a dark casement
I placed my hand before my face -
I looked in the dark glass -
And saw my finger diamonded by
A distant, warm window.

(1941)

I wonder if the
Lightning could sleep with the
Snow?
Barren bride of Winter in her
Chill chaste robe -
Passionate sundries of Heavens
Robed in fire 'broidered mist -
Side by side they must sleep as my
Spirit and my
"Conscious contact" with my environment-

(1941)

Leaf-Light

Leaves on thin petioles -
Leaves straight from ground
Tremulously vibrant blades
Bending in a waltz of winds -
Leaves above Earth, and one
Trunk nearer stars than brother roots.
Saved by loving light winds,
Swimming with a fine flick of greenness
In azure space -
Are you a part of the clouds oh fair ones?
Do you sing in moon m--- as in sun seas?

I do not know you as leaves -
I am a comrade of your rusting and your flaming,
I am one with silver turnings
On silver arms of
Silver stalks on a
Silver Eve -

I am one with grass growing at
High-noon 'neath a nodding canopy in
Wild woods -

Mad moments as such I dwell in,
Make me a wond'rer with my mind -
As problem perplexing as to
Space-song on Earth-slave -
Am I one body nearer stars, or am
I one mind removed from matter?
You licking leaves of winds breast, such essence
From matter, mate essence with light from a
Golden far-flung orb, and cause wonder.

(1942)

(Untitled)

I pass thru the blossoms -
I am of air and of light -
Fragile and insidious as mind
I permeate lovely things

I course thru lovely leaves,
I bubble in tree veins, tree capillaries,
Tree arteries -
I pulse in tree hearts.

I ensnare sun messengers,
Then I am liaison 'twixt ground and light.

I blossom and enter -
I bloom and consume -
I hate and destroy -
I love and am consumed.

I am fiber in man['s] muscle,
I am soft in women's breast -
I am sound in darkness -
I am water in deserts.

One man is not my home.
Laughing, I leave body for body -
Loving, I [leave] in blood and sweat -
Freely I pass 'twixt love and beloved -
And no one is stranger to me.

(1943)

I am of your dust - Tree cells -
You are of my blood - Tree blood -
Diverging branches disclose
The Tree-Soul -
My Eye-Flash, tells me to the World -

(1944)

Peace with the World and
Peace with me,
And Grey Graves of
Roaming Rivers sweep the sky -

Grate of star-bars,
Coals of star-stuff -
Spark of mind -
And
I?

(1944)

Begone: you wasteful minutes --
Those robbers of dreams so true.
For each and every moment
Allows for actions so few.

The heart has so many hopes --
The heart has so many dreams.
A wasted portion of a day
Never fits into our schemes.

Sylvan Evening

Revelry under the moon master -
Dancing 'mid the mushrooms and tall grass -
Skipping, teasingly running, leading,
Then - suddenly - out of sight -
Buried in fragrance of harvest fields
So the sprite confounds me of a warm evening!

I have been basking in the moonlight -
Perhaps my senses have departed upwards
On the strings of light -
Yet, be it as it may
You still are there -
Dancing, skipping,
Teasingly running,
'Mid the mushrooms and tall grass

(1956)

The Lady Chews

Her black hair
Hangs heavy

Her face is oval light
The arm - the neck
In Truth are Speech

The Beauty beholden
Is all of All!

But -
The lady chews!

(1956)

Memories and messages from Hal's family and friends:

To My Dad:

You were always a work in progress. You had a few rough edges in your younger years but time and experience smoothed them to a pleasant surface. Your restless nature was held in check by family and the workplace. There was always something new that needed to be seen, heard, read, or experienced.

You moved seamlessly from one portion of life to another; from academia to the workplace, to a home life. You spent time teaching me to play baseball and to pitch hit; you and mom were terrific bridge players; you loved socializing with friends and co-workers. Your wide range of interests and your vast curiosity gave me a model to use when I became an adult and I have tried to live up to that standard. Your passions were so clear: books, music - especially opera, and people. I have so many wonderful memories of the people you and mom gathered around you.

I remember the books were an issue for Grandma Sexton in that she felt they didn't go with the décor in the front room. I always wondered how that conversation went when she wanted you to get rid of the books! Obviously, the books stayed! I believe I inherited your love of books and reading and now I have just as many books in my home and they also do not go with the décor!

I remember music being intertwined in your life; the Dixieland jazz, the German beer drinking music, the Herb Alpert and Al Hirt records, and of course, the operas! Looking back, I think it must have been a wonderful pleasure for you to go to Frank Thompson's house to listen to all that great music on his sound system!

And people; they were such an important part of your life. You made friends everywhere you went and many of them became life-long friends. You saw something positive in everyone, which was probably how you gained such a wide base of knowledge because you listened and learned a little bit from everyone!

You had an amazing body of knowledge. Science, of course, but your interests and your knowledge grew to include so much more. I really cannot think of an area where you had no knowledge. I believe your friends and your family were equally amazed at your breadth of knowledge.

But in the end, I think you enjoyed being a grandparent the most. I do not know how I would have made it through my work years without you and mom doing a bit of "overnight babysitting." Your grandchildren were always so happy to visit you and mom and you both were happy to spend time listening to them. I know they all have wonderful memories of you and I think they are using those memories to raise their children with a sense of wonder and curiosity.

But your defining characteristic was kindness. You had once told me that you thought you got that from your father who, during the Depression, never turned anyone away who stopped and asked for food. I would like to think that any kindness and patience I have developed in life was in large part due to your influence.

We will all miss you.

- Kathy Bissell

Grandpa: I don't know if I ever had a bigger cheerleader than you; from grade school projects to big life choices, you always believed in me and told me so. You taught me by example how to lead an examined life, with curiosity and optimism (I'm still working on that one) and kindness and patience (still working on that one, too). Your never-ending pursuit of passions and interests inspires me to keep going, keep learning, keep trying new things. You showed me that all of this is possible and told me that I am capable of all of it and more. Because of you, I know that life is supposed to be fun (though not without challenges), interesting, meaningful, and constantly evolving. What a gift to have been your granddaughter.

- Morgan Solem

Grandpa, it is so hard to imagine a world without you in it. Losing you has been more painful than I could have ever imagined. But as I examine this hurt, it gives way to gratitude, and there is so much joy for the life you lived, and all that you gave.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you for always listening to me, for guiding me, and teaching me how to make the perfect hot chocolate.

Thank you for your openness about your depression. You were the first person with whom I ever spoke of my depression; you said exactly what a scared and confused teenager needed to hear.

Thank you for introducing me to photography. You instilled a true joy in my life, and every time I take a great picture, I instinctively think of showing it to you.

Thank you for those evenings when we would sit on the couch, eat ice cream, and stay up past midnight talking about books and history and the meaning of life.

Thank you for introducing me to the Marx Brothers. They were the last thing you and I ever talked about, and as a result, my final memory of you is one of laughter and joy.

Thank you for inspiring me to learn, to grow, to lead with kindness, to greet the world with curiosity, to write, to always be there for family, and most of all... just for being there.

You were my grandfather, and you have meant everything to me.

- Julian Benabides

As a child you were mythical to me: I thought you were a werewolf and Santa Claus rolled into one. I remember your howl, I can almost hear it now. Your beard and jolly demeanor were unmatched. You were a dream come true for a young girl in need of a grandfather. I often told you that you were the best grandfather I could have asked for and I hope you knew that I meant it. I always felt so lucky that you were my grandpa, especially because you weren't even supposed to be my grandpa. Your love and commitment were steady, consistent, and unwavering. You treated everyone with respect. You welcomed everyone into your home. You made everyone feel like they were your favorite person in the whole world; you were mine.

As much as I miss you, I will always be grateful to have had you in my life. And I'm so glad that my son got to meet his "Pa." I love you, I miss you, and I'll never, ever forget you.

- Bobbie Benabides

One hundred and one years...I'm not surprised. And gracious voracious living, indeed.

I met Hal many years ago when I was with Lt. Governor Ed Reinecke's Marine & Coastal Resources office. I was a newbie to both politics and the California coast, Hal became my guide and mentor. He patiently educated me on such a wide variety of topics: sea life, poetry, astronomy. The depth and range of his knowledge was astounding.

My favorite memory is when he spoke of sea life, particularly the coelacanth: a living fossil fish. I'm smiling now 'cuz I nicknamed Hal "See-Oh", an abbreviation of the fish name. Not that he was a fossil by any means, but a vibrant, dear, amusing, caring man.

The world was grand with him in it.

-Roma Heerhartz

I knew Hal professionally through his many activities. He was a tireless scientist soaking in knowledge like a sponge. He was a multi- disciplined observer of the natural world. He was willing to share his knowledge and experience with others.

[...] It was my pleasure to have known and learn from "Hal". He had a wealth of knowledge of the natural world and life experiences to share with others.

- Felix E. Smith

Hal was always a counselor to staff at Jones & Stokes, helping some find their way in their careers and lives.

We enjoyed seeing Hal at the Met Opera movies at the theater on Greenback with Elizabeth in more recent years. As I recall, Judy and I attended our first Sacramento Opera performance with Hal and Charlie Hazel back in the 1970s, and we have seen countless operas since.

He lived a great life and will be remembered fondly by our family.

- Curt Spencer

Hal was very kind and supportive to me some years back. I was going through a very rough patch of my life, he shared his wisdom and gave me encouragement. He gave me a card that I have not only framed, I have passed it on to other friends who needed the same message - it was about being patient and kind to ourselves. It is now sitting on the bedside table of the daughter of one of my best girlfriends - she was in depression after losing her father to cancer when she was just 12 years old. She is doing better and is a graduate student at UC Davis now. That card became "the traveling pants of sisterhood" of sorts. I've told Hal, he had a kick out of it and was happy for me that I was out of my conundrum.

- Mia Hershiser

One of the things I noticed and most appreciated about your grandfather was that he listened. After my mother passed I often had the chance to have breakfast with Hal. I truly cherish those breakfasts. Lumberjacks around the corner from him or at Bella Bru on Fair Oaks. I never heard him say an unkind word about anyone and yet we talked about everything and everyone. He was balanced, humorous and kind.

His love for his daughter and his grandchildren was inspiring. His pride in [their] accomplishments and adventures knew no bounds. He was factual, informative and shared his own history generously. He loved his roots and his family in Twinsburg. I believe his life was better for knowing me and I know mine was better for knowing him. [...] He loved life and was an adventurer to the end. [...] In just a few short years he made an impact in my life that will endure to the end of my days. [...] I am grateful for the love he shared.

- Phoebe Celestin

I have known few men as kind, full of fun and who listened. He had a gift. [...] He was genuinely engaged with the people in his life.

He lived a good life and my life is better for knowing him.

- Connie Kagel

What I remember most about Hal, what stays in my mind when I think of him, is him sitting in the family room, smoking his pipe, reading his paper, and also his contagious smile and deep jaunty laugh while wearing his beret. He was a man who lived a life of contentment and happiness and I will always smile when I think of Hal and Pat.

- Karen Toivonen Bauser

I was very saddened to hear of Hal's passing. I will always remember him as a gentle man who was always ready to help anyone in need. I have wonderful memories of the many times that Hal, Pat, Charlie, and I camped on the Klamath River. We thoroughly enjoyed those two!

Words that come to mind are: gracious, kind, loving, and true friends.

May God be with you in your love,

- Doris Hazel

Harold was a great man with the best bushy eyebrows I can remember.

- Barbara Scott

I was married to Harold's youngest sister-in-law, Marian. As newlyweds, we used to visit with Harold and Patricia.

Harold worked part time in a camera store in order to get very good prices on photo equipment and he used to share his discounts with me. That allowed me to take many rolls of film of our families together. Wonder if any of those pictures still exist?

In time we drifted apart and only last year while talking to my daughter, Barbara Scott, did I find that Harold was still alive and living nearby. A quick exchange of telephone numbers brought contact with Kathy and a reunion at the facility where Harold lived. What excitement! We re-lived old times and more than seventy-five years of memories.

Thanks to Kathy, I was able to visit with him four more times. Unforgettable recollections.

May you rest in peace, Harold.

- Bob Kimble