

Autumn Promenade

Trees long cloaked like dowagers
in summer's green restraint
break into dancing down the creek
where frost's wild brush
dashed gaudy paints.

Matron Oak dares Hickory
to match her fancy crinolines,
Locust answers with a shout
of brazen yellow,
bold as sin.

Cottonwood in a sallow pout
whispers shocking accusations
at the showy arrogance
of her brightly gowned relation.

Sumac shimmies without shame,
outrageous in her scarlet gown,
broad Catalpa hangs her head
above her shift of shapeless brown.

Only Plum brush, low and drab,
crouched below the raucous bliss,
knows how soon all beauty bows,
naked, under Winter's kiss.

Lowell Long

Vision of Autumn

Beneath a vaulted canopy
of muted particolored leaves

I walk along a wall, cold to the touch
And colder still inside,

As if the trampled sodden rank and
Leafy salad swirling on

The tarmac path above the pigeon dung
And withered chestnut hulls

Moved with the dark dull effort of my mood.
Across a waffled earthen plot

Proud churches, humble farms contend;
Down old stone roads a caravan,

Its battered carapace a threat
To custom and tomorrow rolls

Past both of them while workers bend
To scrub worn gravestones and shop
stoops.

John Sherry

Anasazi

Mesa castles in the sky
Where paintbrush blooms and eagles fly.
A people's passage marked in stone;
Artifacts of flint and stone.

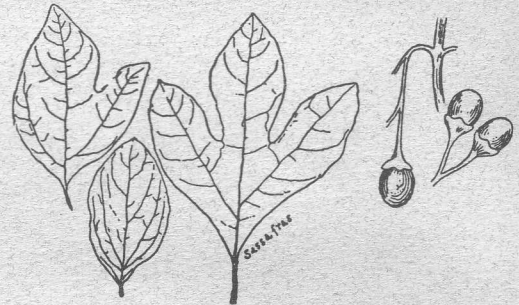
Cliffy cities--vanished host,
Sanctum haunt of hawk and ghost,
Beseech your mummies rise to tell
The secrets time has kept so well.

Shadow dwellers, do you know
The coyote cries--the winds still blow
Like spectre voices from the past;
Your dreams are gone--the relics last.

Ancient builders of the rock,
Do you leave your stones to mock,
Anasazi, could it be--
Your silent ruins . . . a prophecy.

C. David Hay

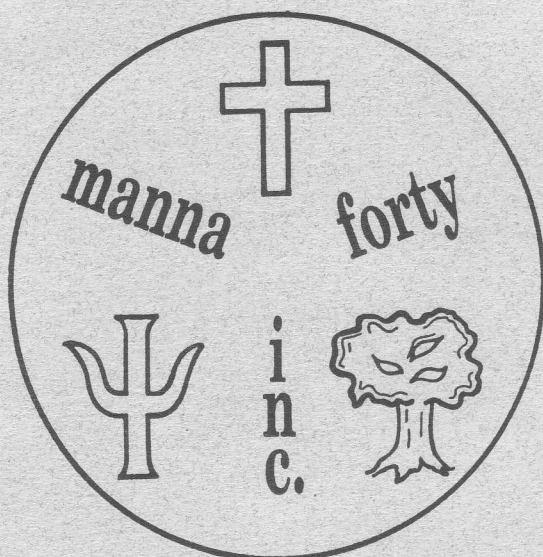
(From *Snake River Reflections*, 1992)



When Fall Began

I can no longer say--
As if I ever could have--
When fall began
And summer ended;
If it was one day's failed sun,
Or another's too cold rain
And languorous, low-lying clouds,
Or when the prairie wind
Shifted to the north
For a few hours.
I only know
In retrospect:
I gave no thought to autumn then,
Nor do I remember now
How or when fall began.
It made its way
With so little ceremony;
I can only say
Fall is here,
Indisputably,
This time.

Howard F. Stein



manna

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September Night

Clean, bright
lemon slice of moon,
slanting just a
quarter up the sky,
gilds the night-rich
woods with pale gold,
traces patterns down
the bluestem hill,
haunted by a curling
phantom wind.

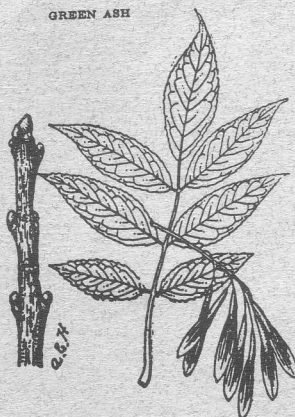
Twists of clouds
pinned white on
navy blue,
shadowless and calm
they dream below
needle points of stars
strung loosely on
the inner, secret circle
of the night.

I have found you out
September sky,
this touching souls
of poets and of fools,
to lend the both of them
inside of me,
a time to dream
my sad/sweet
autumn dreams.

Lowell Long



GREEN ASH



Autumn Winds

The winds of spring were full of song;
I ran too fast to hear.
Now I find the music gone
As winter clouds draw near.

Summer's blooms have faded;
Their fragrance lingers on--
Flowers of the heart
Are never truly gone.

The leaves have turned to amber,
Twilight brings a chill.
Shadows stretch dark fingers,
Autumn winds grow still.

There's time to sow and time to grow;
The seasons make their claim.
Winter winds are blowing--
God just called my name.

C. David Hay

(From *Wings*, 1990)



The End of Indian Summer

When north winds gnaw the corners of the eaves
And night birds etch the dusk upon a wire
Then sunset burns the old cathedral spire
And makes an offering of crimson leaves.

The autumn twilight hesitates and cleaves
A silent moment at the funeral pyre.
As glowing embers flicker and expire
September's ghost relents, repents, and grieves.

I won't reflect, nor dare to stop and think
Of other Indian summers I have known . . .
My days with you of love and happiness
Have disappeared as swiftly as a blink
Of just one eye, and now I have been shown
The vast totality of loneliness.

Marian Ford Park