

First Place

Congratulations here
you have run further faster
than all others

this fast forwarding
this leaping over steeplechase obstacles
this disregard for fellow runners
allows you to be first
at the finish line

first to pick up the prize
first not to be bound
by the physics of energy
and kinesthetics and inertia
first to celebrate speed
first to set a record

first
so you can look back
and gloat
at lesser mortals
the stumbling and handicapped
the slow and steady

Another Gold Medal

Midst the hype of Vancouver 2010 Olympics we buried my mother
she never owned the podium
did a triple axle or scored a hockey goal
programmed a VCR or owned a credit card
but she won gold in our hearts
gold for her caring ways, gold for her busy hands
gold for her humanitarian heart

She never had her Olympic moment
never appeared on TV or got an Olympic ranking
but she ranks high in our hearts, ranks with the medal winners
in cooking, sewing, helping, hoarding and recycling
ranks with international aid agencies in giving
ranks with the diplomats and ambassadors
in extending good will to grandchildren
ranks with God's peacemakers to family and friends

Mom never set an Olympic record
in ski jumping or speed skating or biathlon
but in her family she won – persevering for 95 years, 10 months and 15 days
in 1980 she sewed 10 large cushions, 72 regular cushions, 135 pillow cases
75 painted tea towels, 25 crib blankets, 2 patch blankets
54 pot holders, 8 table cloths, 8 doll bed sets, and more
multiplied by 25 years of retirement
that would show her records in the sewathon
but she would probably be disqualified because she kept her own records
she might even be banned because she took performance enhancing licorice
or be sent home because she got distracted with meal preparation
or with playing countless games of Skipbo, cards and Scrabble

She never got international acclaim
but as she entered many stood at her funeral
coming from far to her viewing, her funeral, her graveside
to acclaim her goodness, her faithfulness
to acknowledge her spirit, her endurance, her longevity
to family, to friends, to community, to God
and as she enters the next venue in eternity many will cheer her on

Simplify

simplify
like painting
a whole house white
is a mathematical process whereby
whole numbers
mixed numbers
fractions and decimals
algebraic equations
and bracketed numbers
are removed, combined, solved
to knock all their precision
till a number
stands simplified
by removing all brackets
which we can disregard
removing most decimals
which we can throw away
converting most fractions
which we can't throw away
painting mixed fractions
with a white common denominator
where we
add, subtract, multiply, and divided
until X
becomes a simplified white number
a simple process
one only simpler
if I could whitewash
the whole of mathematics
by removal
to simplify
what's in my mind

Why Do I Love Shakespeare

Why do I love Shakespeare?
Let me count the ways.
I love his characters
to the fidelity of kindred souls;
I love his vocabulary
to the deepest well of coining;
I love his humor
to the soul of comic relief;
I love his poetics
to the great expanse of the iambic;
I love his wisdom
to the heart of philosopher's wit;
I love his plots
to the height of the double-cross.
I love him to the far reaches of
heroes like Hamlet, Olivia, and Romeo,
to the villainies of Shylock, Cassius and Lady Macbeth,
to the purities of Cordelia and Brutus,
to the entertainment of Falstaff and Sir Toby.
And if God choose, I shall but love him better
when I meet him hereafter.

The Law of Diminishing Returns

I bought a new hearing aid
and sometimes I think
[It isn't rocket science or brain surgery]
that all my hearing problems
are now solved.

But I still don't process all sounds
and sometimes I think
my brain is just not fast enough
to decode and process.

I feel that I should just
grow old [and deaf] gracefully
and sometimes I think
that I am complicating the problem.

I hope that people will notice my impairment
and sometimes I think
they will speak more loudly.

But speech dribbles into murmurs
and sometimes I think
they just don't care.

I should just give up trying
and sometimes I think
I will.

What will be left is that
sometimes I think.

And sometimes I think.

Sometimes.