

CHRISTMAS PASSED

BY JAN BONO, OF LONG BEACH,
WASHINGTON

The cat curls
among the teddy bears
oblivious
to the twinkling lights
One present remains
expectantly
on the red and green
gingham skirt
With my glasses off
the lights blur
like my vision of what
might have been
I try to block
what I'll learn will be
our last conversation
but my memory's too sharp
Our words will come
unbidden
in the stillness of
long winter nights

Am I a Who

BY CURTIS YODER, OF ASTORIA

Am I a Who
Or
Am I a What?
What is a Who?
Noun, Verb, or phrase?
song, instrument, orchestra, audience?
New, borrowed, always was?
Without doubt
I am now
And when I see the light in your eyes
And see they see the light in mine
It is love,
It is to die for
As He did, beautiful soul
So kind and so wise

A Winter Walk in Hamlet

BY DIANE VANDERSHULE, OF GEARHART

Step onto a carpet of Spruce, Alder, and
Maple leaves in myriad shades of golden
brown, lighter tans, siennas and dark
brown.
Oh, what is that? Chanterelle? No, a golden
Cascara leaf plays camouflage with my
eyes, protecting the possibilities.
Wait; could those be Fairy Ring mush-
rooms? Closer look reveals Sorrel hugging
pale leaves inward.
There are no flowers on this walk — only
festive red berries for hungry birds and for-
est creatures.
A startled doe trots toward the creek, then



A photo of a previous Ilwaco Crab Pot Christmas Tree.

stops to watch me. Perhaps she is thinking
my eyes cannot see her as she blends into a
forest of browns and tans.
Puffs of cold wind sprinkle a shower of
needles on and around me, adding depth to
the carpet.
Lichen also drifts down, some in bunches
and some attached to small branches.
Eagerly, I pick them up to dry and make tea
good for the lungs.
It froze last night here on the mountain. In
the morning sun a shimmer of water drops
appear as diamonds on the tips of Huckle-
berry buds.
The end of this path is my cue to return

home, review and add these beautiful gifts
of God to my collection of memories.

On Dad's Side (adapted for Coast Weekend from 'The Man Who Whistled, The Woman Who Wished: A Polish-Canadian Story')

BY FLORENCE SAGE, OF ASTORIA

Some Christmas Eves at Dad's parents'
house
when we were small, cousins conspired
under the table on the straw put down
for the cattle in the stable. Granddad Basil

carried us
on his back as in Polish we called him
Horsie.
Grandma Anna, hair rolled sausage tight
around the bottom of her head,
two steel safety pins holding an apron bib
to her chest,
crushed us to her in the kitchen for the
holiday
then set herself apart, never sat, counte-
nanced no help,
and brought out labor-intensive dishes, per
tradition:
pierogi with several fillings: potatoes with
cheese,
cabbage, cherries, even swoony prunes
— and golumpki, cabbage leaves wrapping
meaty rice,
all with buttery onions and pork rind and
sour cream.

On those holidays Basil coaxed our mother
to take
a stiff drink for the standing toast before the
meal.
Mom was a tea drinker by taste, back then,
not yet
having found the joy of an afternoon gin
and tonic
in her widowhood.
From the back of the cupboard our Dziadek
brought out
one of his clear bottles with their florid
enigmatic labels,
the liquid a harsh burn on Mom's innocent
throat.
From under the table, through the white
lace cloth,
all the kids' eyes watched Mom, highlight
of the event,
as the little amber glasses were poured over
protest,
and arms lifted in unison up to the center of
the table
to click, na zdrowie, and by Granddad's
command
the drink went down the hatch in one.
Our mother's face screwed up just short of
convulsion.
She coughed as if her father-in-law had
given her
onions, varnish and nails in a shot
as a test or a private joke or a retribution for
taking Dad.
But she took it for Dad's team every time,
paused speechless, shook her head,
cleared her shredded throat and sat down
to the comforting food, good health on
platters
with sour cream on top, carried from the
kitchen
with Anna's hopeful little smile.

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