

POEMS TO MARK THE TIME BY

Two poetry collections offer wise insight for readers

The world seems to be revving back up for a long-awaited return to “normal” but I find myself resisting that slide back into the noise and faster pace. To tarry a bit longer in a more contemplative state, I turned to two poets whose work better suited my mood.

This week's books

‘Pages of White Sky’ by Tim Sherry
MoonPath Press — 138 pages — \$16

‘The Man Who Whistled, The Woman Who Wished’ by Florence Sage
Gray Area Press — 140 pages — \$20

Both of the poets are elders and each is endowed with that quiet brand of humor that’s been burnished by the long view. While each is nostalgic to a degree, there’s a dash of vinegar in some of those memories too.

Tacoma, Washington, poet Tim Sherry sees the potential for poetry everywhere. The poems in “Pages of White Sky” bear that out.

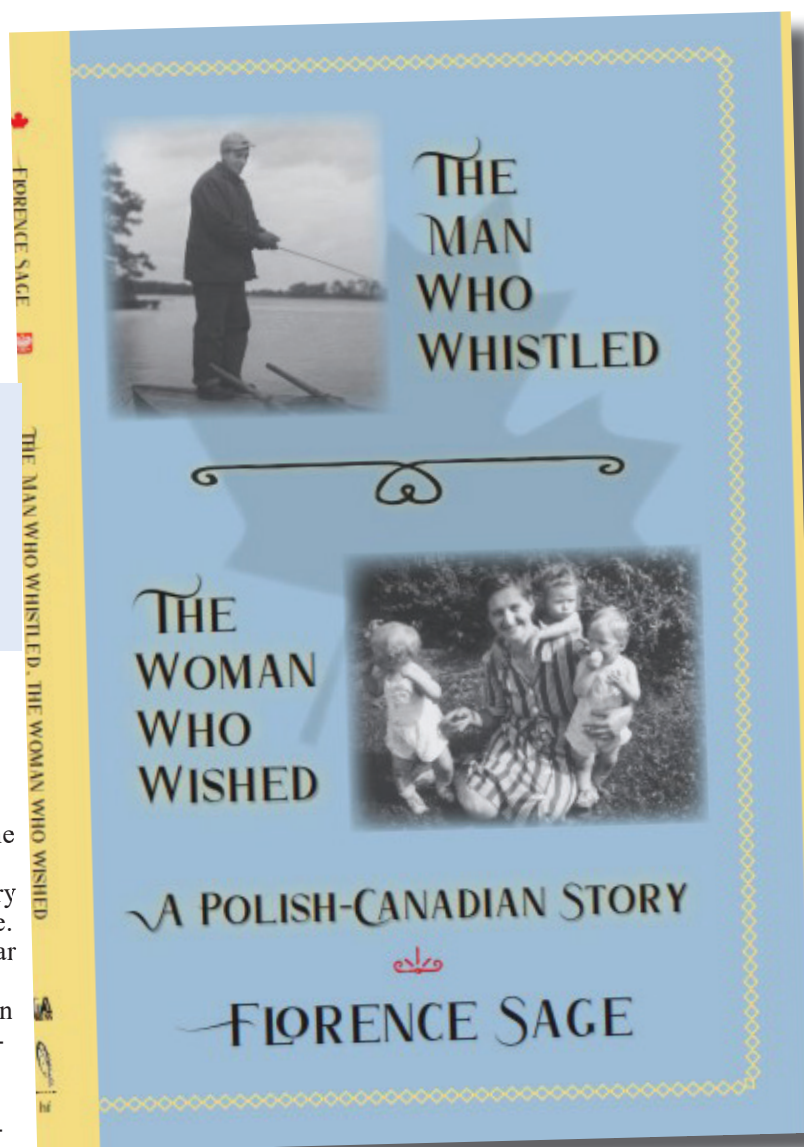
There’s poetry to be found in children on the beach at the Crescent City Lighthouse and at the Little Britches Rodeo way out in Eastern Oregon.

If one man makes art out of lost hubcaps, stovepipes and bowling balls, there’s a poem in that: “What to Call It.”

There’s poetry in museums and in man caves. There’s metaphor in illegally parking in an unloading zone. There’s even an “Elegy for the Five Dollar Fill-Up.”

And then there’s acknowledging our own mortality. Sherry comes at this topic from different angles but these pieces are musings rather than lamentations.

“Meditation in the Mirror” is threaded with rueful humor as the poet acknowledges that the mirror is “... where I understand / the Stockholm syndrome – in love with my captor, / that old man looking back at me.”



And “I Used To Be My Name” is an autobiographical sketch that extends from the youthful glories of the playing field, to those mid-life years of career and raising kids, to the present — where his scaled-back duties include picking up a grandchild from daycare and playing coachman to her princess as he drives her home.

From Gettysburg to Ground Zero, from Ephesus to Elvis — Sherry marvels at the continuum of life and appreciates his place within it. This is a fine use for poetry.

Astoria poet Florence Sage takes a

more focused approach but like Sherry, she also celebrates the eloquence in the everyday.

Sage’s poetry volume, “The Man Who Whistled, The Woman Who Wished” focuses on her childhood as the daughter of first-generation Polish-Canadian parents.

As the third of three children all born within 11 months to Florence and Vic Skrekowicz, Sage commemorates her warm-hearted family in narrative poetry. While acknowledging hardships such as wartime rationing and dangerous communicable diseases, the prevailing tone

of these pieces is one of accommodation and belonging.

Whether she is writing about her dad’s great deal on gallons of “Green Paint” or her mom taking a sledgehammer to the dining room chimney or “The Laundry Hustle” adopted by a family with better things to do, Sage’s gift is in calling attention to the lyricism and surprises of daily living.

The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at barbaralmcm@gmail.com.

