GUYANA

A Treasure of Golden Things

21 poems

By Dmitri Allicock

BOX - OVEN BREAD
In the treasured days of yore
A box oven for bread and more
An oven for baking made of wood
A lining of metal within, so it could

The kneading, rising of the dough
Coal-pot fired up, it’s ready to go
Coal-pot in the oven, embers glow
Oven outside the house I use to know

There were no knobs of control to turn
Practice made perfect, bread didn’t burn
The bread in the oven, rising in the pan
Checking on the bread, a coal-pot to fan

The aroma of box oven baking it was said
On the breeze aloft was indeed the best bread
Slice this cotton candy bread of crust of brown
Dab the cow & girl butter, bread wins the crown.
GATE OF GOLDEN MEMORIES
Gone, but always in my heart are my schoolmates of MHS, Brian Sills, Orin Massey, Wayne Moore, Floyd Dodson, Eugene Philips, Paul Crawford and others. [Linden- Guyana]

When the gate of memories swings
I step into a garden of golden things
The dear gate which opens my heart
Revealing images that will never part

The golden gate that invites me in
The treasures of yesterday living within
Photographs of just moments in time
Faces of family and friends that are divine

Into that garden I still wander to and fro
Remembering golden friends I use to know
Sometimes I close my eyes and see them there
Feel their presence in the garden we once again share.
THE OLD KEROSENE STOVE

An errand to run, some kero to buy
I’m cooking dahl and have fish to fry
In the old kitchen and treasure trove
Is that old faithful kerosene stove

Long before stoves of electric or gas
Lived the kerosene stove of the past
Twas a step up from the old fireside
This stove could now be kept inside

The old kero stove was yesterday’s treat
Served well in making food for us to eat
Now stoves of gas or electric are the scene
Ceramic- glass counter top stoves to clean.
A BRAZEN KISKADEE
[Linden- Upper Demerara- Guyana]

In the land of many waters and birds
Brazen kisskadees are always heard
They are proud, found all over town
To man’s rules, they wear the crown

This kiss of a Kiskadee wanted a drink
Thirsty in the sun, he said let me think
It’s the dry season and no rain in the air
But he spots a faucet and he would dare

The defiant Kiskadee flew onto the tap
He clasp his feet, the faucet he wrapped
With a little twist the pipe started to flow
The refreshed and brazen kiskadee to know.
The clipity clop of an 1890s trot
Fancying a horse and buggy a lot
Clipity clop in the Capital’s street
The rhythmic hooves echoes sweet

Feeling the sea breeze in their route
Basking in the sun without a doubt
Elegance of a horse and buggy scene
Coachman guiding the horse in a dream.
LAND OF PLENTY - 1872
[Essequibo, British Guiana]

An 1872 Plantation house is the scene
Perhaps a plantation of coffee beans
A look into the fog of history for the eye
It is an Essequibo plantation and I will try

Guyana was first to export coffee to taste
All the plantations long gone without a trace
In this 1872 Land of Plenty, that was then
Sugar, rice, and coffee grown by strong men

Guyana is still full of fertile and good land
But no coffee growing, I don’t understand
With Sugar Estates failing and going down
On the land, I say grow rich coffee all around

    Coffee is easy to grow and to process
    To new coffee plantations, I say a big yes
    An image of the Land of Plenty of 1872
    Coffee can be growing again under sky of blue.
DRIVE ALONG THE SEA WALLS
[Georgetown, Sea walls 1890- British Guiana]

Drive along the Georgetown Seawalls
Echoes on the wind of the 1890s’ calls
Feel majesty of time as the music play
Drive along to the seawalls’ promenade

Drive along the Georgetown Seawalls
For the evening cool, ladies bring a shawl
   Stroll on the paved seawalls at the top
Hear the melody of life, playing nonstop

Drive along the Georgetown Seawalls
Horses and carriages of style on the sprawl
Head to the seafront and follow the course
See granite breakwaters absorbs the force

    Drive along the Georgetown Seawalls
    Come for an outing, come one, come all
    Below the level of the sea at spring-tides
    Drive along the seawalls where glee bides.
COLORS OF HISTORICAL GEORGETOWN
[British Guiana]

Beautiful Georgetown shining bright
The Venice of the Caribbean in the light
Wide roadways shaded by saman trees
Sunny Capital tempered by the sea breeze

Canals full of fragrant lilies, pure and fair
Beautiful colonial style of houses to stare
Crotons, bougainvilleas, petals of bright hue
Racemes of oncidium beneath sky of blue

A magnificent Georgetown, full of awe
This was the image my grandparents saw
A City with order and immaculately clean
Captured in a photograph and can be seen.
WHEN A DOLLAR WAS NICE
[A 1942 British Guiana Dollar]

I took one dollar and went to the store
To buy sugar, flour, oil, salt- fish and more
What is the soft drinks going for I asked?
Fetching my shopping bag home was a task

I needed some pigtails, salt- beef weighed
My hands in my pocket, the dollar I paid
A single dollar in the shade of the 1940 sun
My overfilled shopping bag and I frowned

I wanted a tub of butter, cheese and lard still
Sweet fresh baked bread and that was a gill
I asked the British Guiana shopkeeper the price
I paid a dollar, got some change and that was nice.
MY GRANDFATHER’S ROCKING CHAIR
[Georgetown circa 1900]

I remember a rocking chair of my early childhood
A dear rocker crafted of Guyana’s precious wood
Smooth was the touch and a seat woven of wicker
That shone in the Upper Demerara sunlight flicker

Silhouette of my Grandfather, sitting morning long
By the window, drinking coffee to the outdoor song
Where he told stories of the river with me on his lap
Where he rested in dreamland for his afternoon nap

Like a hammock or the amazing Berbice chair of rest
The rocking chair of the bygone years, were the best
Gone to winds of time and the living rooms of today
Precious antique of the back & forth and history’s sway.
CRICKET ON THE SANDS
[British Guiana 1907]

Cricket on the sands, feel the sun
The lads of 1907 having fun
Cricket on the sands, feel the sea
Burton & Parker of Guiana I want to be
Cricket on the sands, hear seagulls call
Have a swing at the balata ball
Cricket on the sands, feel it with your toes
The dreaming hearts of 1907 glows
Cricket on the sands, see the sailing ships
For lunch, enjoy some fish and chips.
MY PUZZLING TIN
Once upon a treasured time
Lived a puzzling tin of mine
Made for the pennies I found
Of childhood’s blessed grounds

My tin now called a piggy bank
For those big pennies I say thanks
It was first that thought me to save
For errands or chores, the folks gave

A Milo or Ovaltine tin made with a slit
And in there I dropped one or two bits
It was indeed a puzzle to shake them out
The puzzling tin taught me well, no doubt.
A 1760 CANNON
[Watooka- Linden, Guyana]

Within Upper Demerara’s historical hazed
Is this majestic 1760 Cannon for us to gaze
Journey of the early Dutchmen is this story
Way up the Rio Demerary and its former glory

Of gunpowder barrels, muskets and blood
Some relics are buried in the creeks and mud
Of the Dutchman’s days, slavery and chains
Memories are alive within the DNA and veins

History awaits discovery on Demerara’s shore
The story of lost heritage of a people and more
A 1760 cannon, cannon balls, powder and blast
A relic of that time and Demerara’s deep past.
DRAGLINE BUCKET
[Mackenzie- Linden, Guyana]

A dragline bucket cast aside on the ground
Just rusting away quietly without any sound
But not very long ago it dug for bauxite deep
And now rest on abandoned train tracks asleep

This bucket knows the thunder in the jungle
The dynamite blasting and the distant rumble
A mighty bucket attached to a dragline boom
Resting in the sun where all is quiet as a tomb

This dragline bucket once scooped deep in the hills
Excavating bauxite in the mines now quiet and still
Bucket for the workers with helmets on their heads
Perhaps waiting on those with metal scraps to shred.
SAND IN MY SHOES
[A Dredge at Linden- Upper Demerara]

The fortunes of bauxite and of dreams
A dredge excavating silt downstream
Opening the channel for bauxite ships
It is beaches of golden sand on my lips

Along the river the water tried to hide
It was only mushy mudflat at low tide
Then came the Dredge with sweet sand
Beaches, so lovely are beaches to stand

Sandy beaches lining the Demerara’s shore
Easy to land a boat, to come back for more
And in the sand are those treasures to seek
Now on the beach from the Demerara’s deep.
RIDE THE PULLMAN ONCE MORE
[Mackenzie- Upper Demerara circa 1960s]

Scintilla of a dear old Pullman’s shed
Along the Demerara, the tracks lead
Its 5.30 am in the early morning dew
A train ride of childhood’s sky of blue

Workers and passengers ride for free
Next to my dear Dad, I wanted to be
Smiling faces of welcome they greet
Friends and conversation in every seat

The lush by the tracks waiting to be seen
Then a whistle and the light turned green
The back and forth, train picking up speed
In the dim light a newspaper, trying to read

It is now full steam ahead, away we go
Around the river’s bend, we would slow
The refreshing morning breeze passing by
See the waving folks of a Pullman’s goodbye.
GHOST TRAINS
[Linden, Guyana]

Bauxite trains, long gone but left a sign
Stop, look, listen in the Watooka’s shine
There is nothing moving on the train line
Stop, look, listen, just thoughts on my mind

There are no bauxite train cars to push
Stop, look, listen, the tracks now just bush
There is no sharp whistle of the train heard
Stop, look, listen, only the sounds of the birds

A railroad crossing and a time to stop
Stop, look, listen, they didn’t, then the flop
Catastrophic decisions of those without care
Stop, look, listen, only a sign for the young to share.
TOUCHDOWN
[Watooka- Upper Demerara- Circa 1960, British Guiana]

Travel to Mackenzie then was by many boats
But some came in Grumman planes that floats
Coming from the Caribbean, Canada and more
A smooth touchdown, then to Demerara shore

The Capital City was hours away on the tide
For some Demba staff, a G 21 Goose was the ride
Rugged, roomy, powerful, the Goose went anywhere
The aircraft descending from above and good to hear

Transporting people and equipment from the sky
To Upper Demerara where the Bauxite Industry lie
It was a sight to watch it take off and when it flew
Lifting off the Demerara River into the sky of blue.
THE FINISHING LINE
[My first cousin Joe Murray- Mackenzie, circa 1970s-Upper Demerara]

A Demerara man, keeping the pace
Eyes on the finishing line, he will win this race
Young and strong, long distance running he knows
    Keeping it steady, he would not slow

Hearing his footsteps pounding the asphalt street
    Sweating profusely in the Mackenzie heat
Running for miles after the blast of the gun
Eyes on the finishing line where the river run

    Upfront it is Joe and only Joe that I see
Like my first cousin Joe Murray, I want to be
And it is Joe, only Joe! Picking up the pace
Cheers and more cheers, the finishing line embrace.
Along Demerara where the songbirds sing
Demba’s dairy farm when bauxite was king
It originally provided for the Demba’s staff
Supplying fresh foods, comforts and laughs

In the old days there were cows that moo
Stocks of assorted chickens and pigs too
From the Pullman, it was the farm and me
The well raised animals that I wanted to see

There was that cock-a-doodle-doo alarm
When our boats went by the dairy farm
The rich organic manure was put to use
Grew all sorts of delicious leafy produce
I remember eggs of bright yellow yokes
And priced reasonable for us village folks
A lovely dairy farm that came on the tide
Today, in ruins that the forest tries to hide.
THE TRESTLE

[Silver City, Linden 1970s]

Across the moonlit town I hear a soft whistle
   It must be the bauxite train near the trestle
   It’s the sweet symphony of the Plumba Train
And I just drifted back to that dreamland again

The bauxite train must pass behind Silvertown
   In the hush of Wismar’s darkness all around
   The grounds of the river- floodplain will shake
     Quivering our house yet no one will wake

Then over the trembling bridge the train will go
   Echoes of dogs barking to the a fowlcock’s crow
The train will wait before entering the bauxite plant
   In the land of Mackenzie and memories of enchant.
WHAT IS REMEMBERED

Great moments often catch us unaware—beautifully wrapped in what others may consider a small one. People may not remember exactly what you did, or what you said, but they will always remember how you made them feel.

THE END.