

The Battle of the Squirrel and the CEO

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Captain of industry,
Corporate leader,
Retired to the country,
Set up a bird feeder.
Finch-colored plumage,
And not before eight,
The chorus of birdsong
Not boardroom debate.

But the squirrels eat the birdseed
Frighten finches away.
The squirrels they get fat.
They pig-out all day.
Chased away from the feeder
They're back when your gone.
Scourge of retirees
The fiends of the lawn.

**When you fight the squirrels,
You get no holidays,
No vacation, no weekend.
The squirrels elude your grand
designs.
Each day they eat again.
When you fight the squirrels,
Don't let your guard down,
Keep your wits sharp till the end.
There's nothing else that matters,
You've got that birdseed
To defend.**

He put the birdfeeder
Up on a pole.
But that didn't deter
The squirrel from his goal.
A coating of Crisco
Didn't get in his way.
The squirrel climbed right up
To a birdseed buffet.

A flange on the pole
Just slowed him down.
The squirrel shook the pole,
Knocked seed to the ground.
The angry retiree
Will try anything.
To avoid defeat
By this takeover king.

Chorus

The feeder was hung
By a rope from a tree.
But squirrels can climb ropes
When the birdseed is free.
A sheet metal barrier
Didn't stop him for long.
He gnawed through the rope
And he ate all day long.

So if you have wondered
Why the world's such a mess,
Look what men do
When they're doing their best.
Outsmarted by rodents,
Too proud to give in,
They use up their retirement
In a fight they can't win.

If I Had to Count © Bob Gramann 1996

Hey, did you ever notice how
Morning shadows coat a dusty town
How morning breeze delays the swarm
Of attacking bugs when it gets warm.
How the hammer feels gripped in your hand
Brings a pleasure to the working day
So though my body may be tired,
I know exactly what I've done.

**If I had to count my life in minutes
This is surely what I'd do.
I'd keep on doing what I'm doing
Though my moments might be few.
Make stories 'bout the things I see,
Take notes and truths about history.
Try to bend them into song
The way it feels to me.**

Tropical trees make up this box
I love the feel of real wood
Singing notes from steel strings
Oh it sounds so good to me.
It's lifelong work to get it right
But I practice hard every night
Even though my fingers may be tired,
It certainly feels like fun to me.

It might be it's a dirty job
But I already knew it
Someone has to hold you tight
I'm just the one to do it.

It's lifelong work to get it right
But I practice hard every night
Even though my body may be tired,
This job just must be done.

Pretty Soon © 1996 by R.A. Gramann

It doesn't snow very often
In central Virginia.
It's just too far south.
We're more used to rain.
But there's something 'bout the snow
Brings out that playfulness in you.
An ambush of snowballs
And I'm chasing you again.
A few million snowflakes
A few million kisses
A million here,
A million there,
Pretty soon you're talking 'bout real love.

First impressions last a lifetime
Bringing family ties and bills
And dirty floors and leaking roofs
Not even time for bitchin'
Bedtime stories, soccer, car repairs,
No time to ourselves
Don't forget to say hello
Passing in the kitchen.
A few million greetings
A few million kisses
A million here,
A million there,
Pretty soon you're talking 'bout real love.

*40 million minutes build a lifetime.
A million bricks construct a mall.
A million kisses build a lifelong love.
It's built from things so small.*

Little things make the difference
Like touching while we're talking.
Like talking eye-to-eye
Like loving what you say.
Bringing onions from the grocery
Like kissing as we're waking,
No need to remember
You tell me every day.
A few million words
A few million kisses
A million here,
A million there,

Pretty soon you're talking 'bout real love.
Ferry Story © 1997 Bob and Lou Gramann

Victoria is a splendid city on Vancouver Isle
Casey set out in Old Rattle to shop there for a
while.
Can't drive there from the mainland, but the
ferry isn't bad.
The sun was breaking through the clouds and
she began to smile.

She turned and parked Old Rattle beside the
Quickie Mart.
She browsed among the papers and a picture
caught her heart.
She bought that Vancouver Sun and a
Cadbury's for the ferry run
Casey drove into the ferry. On the auto deck,
she parked.

The sun shone warmly on the deck as she
scouted out a chair.
The news paper would have to wait. She fell
asleep right there.
Of seagulls, foam, and sails she dreamed, as
sunlight on the water gleamed
Nothing better than a nap on deck, out in the
salty air.

A tearing noise beside her and suddenly she
stirred
A wrapper from a candy bar, that was the
noise she heard.
A wrapper blew across the deck, a man was
chewing on her chocolate.
Her mouth it hung wide open, she couldn't say
a word.

While swallowing her candy, he opened up
the Sun.
He chuckled at a story, turned the pages one-
by-one.
He tucked it under his green coat, her angry
words stuck in her throat
The stranger walked away. She couldn't
believe what he had done.

What Casey felt was anger, clawing at her
from inside.
What Casey felt would trouble her all through
the ferry ride.
What Casey felt was hunger gnawing, the hole
the chocolate left was growing.

Why did she let him take it? What happened to her pride?

A sandwich, a sandwich. That would have to do.

Casey went down to the snack bar to get herself some food.

There sat a man in a coat of green, munching on a submarine.

Don't get mad, get even. A plan began to brew.

She spied the other exit onto the starboard deck.

She crept slowly up behind him so he never would suspect.

She gripped the sandwich and his hands, snatched a bite, away she ran.

"If he ever looks at me again, he'll treat me with respect!"

Oh, the joy of vengeance; revenge without a doubt.

Casey ran across the auto deck, so happy she could shout.

There, on the seat inside her car, a paper and a chocolate bar.

There's no joy in Vancouver, mighty Casey has struck out.

Old Rag Mountain © 1996 by Bob and Lou Gramann

Source of falling water
Life and refuge from the plains
Each mountain hollow filled with plants
Unique and unexplained.

**No reason to climb up there
'Cept I want to be above
And feel my muscles push me up
This mountain that I love.**

Vibram scuffing over granite
Bears flee to other trails
It's not because the air is thin
That I stop to inhale.
Ever steeper up the switchbacks
Till the path pokes through the trees
Through crevices and past the cliffs
Up into the breeze.

Ants scrambling over gravel
Weekend tourists climb Old Rag

To view what seems like all the state,
To jump from crag to crag.
I'd really like to meet the man
Who figured out the paths
That snake through gaps between the rocks
Where the hiker scrapes his arms.

*There's many things a father
Wants to pass on to his son.
But, some things he finds out on his own
And shares with everyone.*

Even when its boulder top
Penetrates the clouds
I still imagine the whole world below
As I look around.

The Barns © 1993 by R.A. Gramann

White was once the color
Of this old wood grey garage
Back behind the farmhouse
Next to the leaning barn.
Decade since the last corn
Neighbor cuts hay once a year.
No more working fields at dawn.
Only wildlife living here.

The smells of clay and gasoline,
Old canvas, rope, and straw
Greet the nostrils of the curious
Who explore the old garage.
Throw back the dusty canvas
Worn out '47 Ford.
Must have been to Richmond
A hundred times or more.

Hey, look up in the rafters:
A cedar-ribbed canoe
With peeling skin and rotted seats
And a hole that goes right through.
The day he caught that catfish,
Camping on the south sandbar,
A childhood eighty years ago,
In the boat above the car.

I still love to drive here
To see the stars at night
Though the city's glow
Is brighter every year.
Hear the barn creak in the summer breeze
Watch the sky for satellites.
Imagine that old farmer standing near.

And the weather, bugs, and fungus
Make the barn lean more each year.
The earth pulls on all things
That stand above.
Neglect surrenders to the wind.
No reason left to stand
Next generation's memories
Will be town and not the land.

If © 1999 by R.A. Gramann

If you screamed with delight when I came too near.
I'd know you loved me, I'd call you my dear.
If your voice chimed in tune when I sang a song,
Wherever you'd go, I'd come along.
If your lips formed a smile when our eyes chanced to meet,
If you told me neat jokes, if you played with my feet,
If you tickled my torso and lickled my ear,
I'd chortle and snort 'till I pulled myself clear.

*Sally, I love you, you've got to know:
I'm gonna follow, wherever you go.*

If I stole up behind you and circled your waist,
Would you shake loose and flee or return the embrace?
If I made up a song about your dainty knees,
Would you stutter and blush or just be displeased?
If I brought you some licorice, if I brought you some cheese,
If I made you a neck a lace of clovers and bees,
If I tickled your torso and lickled your ear,
Would you love me forever or just 'till next year?

If I knew not the answer, well, I wouldn't ask.
If it weren't for true love, you'd be feeling harassed.
Tickles and lickles, chortles and chase,
I'd run till I caught you no matter the place.

*Sally, I love you, you've got to know:
I'm gonna chase you, wherever you go.*

If I were a cabbage moth, if you were my light.

I'd find myself drawn to you, night after night.
If you were a ladybug and I were the wind
I'd lift you to me and catch you again.
It's not hypothetical, we can't be apart.
Your lipids and quippeds belong in my heart.
If I tickled your torso and lickled your nose
Would you grant your acceptance to all I propose?

If I knew not the answer, well, I wouldn't ask.
If you didn't love me, my heartplane would crash.
Tickles and lickles, love you till I die,
No closer friend can you find than I.

*Sally, I love you, I've got to know:
We'll walk together, wherever we go.*

There's no finer ending than coming back home
Be it owned, or rented, or purchased on loan.
If you screamed with delight when I came too near
I'd tickle your torso and tickle your ear.
*Sally, I love you, We've got to know:
We'll walk together, wherever we go.*

Kid's Talk © 1998 by R.A.&M.L. Gramann

It might be oral tradition.
It might be in the genes.
They didn't learn it from their parents.
Did they hear it in their dreams?
March of civilization
Hasn't changed the playtime screams.
Voices from the children
Still reflect the same old themes:

**It's mine.
Give it back
I'm gonna tell.
I don't care.
You're it
No tag backs.
Me first.
It's not fair.**

If it hadn't been said before,
They'd have to make it up.
When you're only four years old,
Your feelings just erupt.

If you can't remember
What it's like to be so small
Walk by any playground
Listen to the calls.

They say the world is changing.
Not like when we were young.
Folks are mean, the ozone's lean,
Even children carry guns.
But if you listen to the little kids
You might suspect that they're the same.
Try remembering what it felt like
To play in children's games.

*Kickball, football, slides and swings.
Race and fight, roll on the ground.
Jumping rope, they dance and sing
Might be loud, that's how fun sounds.*

Childhood is for learning
About other times than today,
About life and love and planning
And why all things can't be play.
About the little deals and big deals,
And how to wait your turn,
And when it's best to walk away
And when you should return.

Mountain Stream ©1992, 1999 by R.A. Gramann

Hard rain awoke me in the night.
That only means one thing to me.
A bunch of guys with plastic boats
Will be skipping work today.
Grandma has to die again
We all meet at the edge of town,
Driving for the eastern slopes
To ride the water down.

**I love to ride the back
Of a rushing mountain stream,
To thread between the eddies
Amidst the banks of April green.
The icy water warms my blood,
Waves splash over me,
In the river I am young, I am free.**

To rise before the mist has cleared,
To chase the rainfall down the hillside.
Climb the goat trail road

To the bank where I unload.
I dress to seal my city skin
From the icy mountain water in
Which I'll float without my boat
If I miss a brace.

As I paddle down the mountain stream
The unsuspecting beaver
slaps his tail and swims to flee
the brightly colored threat.
The drinking deer sniffs the air
and bounds into the thicket
While Blue Heron wing in front of me
Then fly back overhead.

To rise before the mist has cleared,
To chase the rainfall down the hillside.

Solitude © 1998 by R.A. Gramann

Solitude, run away
Where time slows down
Quiet pierced by osprey cries
Turtles splash, swim to hide
Ripples spread river wide.
Canoe splits Rappahannock water.
Dip my paddle, let it glide

Roads and fords, mills and mines
Used to line this stream.
All reclaimed by floods and vines
Foundations sprouting gums and pines
River flows on, so does time.
Canoe splits Rappahannock water.
Dip my paddle, let it glide

*Speeding down a country road
Poles fly past.
Like the days, they blur together
Slow it down, don't let it go so fast.*

Children, jobs, and cars and planes
Shrink distances and time.
Engines push us to our eighties,
We become old men and ladies
But I hide where the time escapes me.
Canoe splits Rappahannock water.
Dip my paddle, let it glide

Rain or sleet, or wind or heat,
It's all the same to me.
Weather you can never choose.

Each day that's mine, that day I'll use
To flee from time in my canoe.
Its bow splits Rappahannock water.
Dip my paddle, let it glide

After They Came Home © 1997 by R.A. Gramann

The corn was only three feet high
Imagination couldn't see
That love would be much taller
With each harvest going by.
Little town in Iowa
Norman Rockwell come to life.
Home to this family man
His children and his wife.

Father, lover, businessman.
He coached the softball team.
Leader in this midwest town
Taught basketball to teens.
Expert cookie baker,
Only fault was that he snored
Almost forgot to mention:
He was a hero in the war.

Between the lines
You've got to read between the lines
Their names aren't written on the wall
The people who were killed by war
After they came home
Their names won't be written on the wall.

Patriotic volunteers,
Reluctant conscriptees,
It doesn't matter too much
How they landed overseas.
Where a jet could take a man home
From the fighting overnight
But terrors, tumors, traumas
Might join him for the flight.

Take responsibility
That's what defines a man.
And so it was with John.
Five hundred airmen plucked from harm
The list goes on and on.
Five hundred men escaped the wall
Funny thing is, so did John.

The TV scenes don't come from
Southeast Asia anymore.
It's taught as high school history

A far off time before.
Pause in the conversation
Where my brother would have been.
Knowing what we know now
I'm sure he'd do it all again.

Every generation cries
"Don't let these lessons be forgot."
The widows and the children cry
"Don't let it be for naught."
The nation owes a tribute
To all who gave their lives
Let these tributes be a warning
To all who still survive.

Between the lines
You've got to read between the lines
Their names aren't written on the wall
The people who were killed by war
After they came home
Their names won't be written on the wall.

Between the lines
You've got to read between the lines
Their names aren't written on the wall
Let these tributes be a warning
To all who still survive.
So their names won't be written on a wall.

Love in the Information Age (or Alan Turing's Lament) © 1995 by Bob and Lou Gramann

Mike took a flight Northeast out of Houston.
To write computer games out on the coast.
Trading humidity
For frost and salary
But leaving behind all he loves the most.
He told Sally Ann that everyday he'd write
her.
From mfiller@gamewriternet.com.
He'll be the who writes the code
That makes the beast explode
While dreaming of the bayous and her arms.

Do the 'dillo shells still line
The roads of Texas?
Does the Houston channel water still run brown?
Every day I'm tied to
This wire that connects us
You're the only happiness I've found.

**Information isn't knowledge
Don't let it suck you in.
Wisdom takes years to comprehend.
This living on the wire
Leaves a lot to be desired
I wish that I could see you once again.**

All day his fingers clatter 'cross the keyboard.
To animate imaginary men.
To make what you think you see
Look like reality
But all the while he dreams of Sally Ann.
E-mail flies between them on their keyboards.
Only seconds but two thousand miles apart.
Loving messages he writes
Sally Ann he invites
To visit him and soothe his aching heart.

But those hours at the screen soon made him dizzy.
The diagnosis was a terminal disease.
Six more weeks till she's alone
He couldn't tell her on the phone.
Then he figured how
To keep from being deceased.
He'd write himself a smart computer program.
It would read and answer Sally Ann's e-mail.
Just six weeks to go
To teach it all he knows.
She'd never learn how his health had failed.

He wrote her that it'd take a little longer
He'd be back in just a few more weeks.
As he was growing frail
He built his fake e-mail
Program that forever for him speaks.
He taught it all the things he loved in Houston.
He programmed all he knew of Sally Ann.
He programmed in some sleaze
And his idiosyncrasies.
So she couldn't tell apart machine and man.

The day he died, the e-mail program wrote her.
It typed, "It's snowing, but I'm feeling fine.
I miss your loving eyes,
I miss those cajun fries.
And it's hard to taste your kisses here on-line."
For several months they carried on the romance
With Sally Ann no wiser to the fraud.
Then she wrote that she had grown
But he hadn't on his own.
And she felt their relationship was flawed.

There's a lonely e-mail program in the Northeast.
Searching for another girl on-line.
Searching coast to coast
It's Mike Filler's ghost
But in the fibers of the internet confined.
So don't go spending all your time
Out on the network.
Don't believe in them electronic words
They'll only bring you strife.
It's time you got a life.
There's no difference 'tween a net ghost and a nerd.

Out of My Mind © 1997 by R.A. Gramann

Tried to read the paper
But I can't concentrate.
Ran down to the station
But I got there too late.
Running 'round the city
Looking for you
Wondering if you'll see me
Wondering if you knew.

**I'm out of my mind
Yearning for you
Wrecking my routines
I got irregular blues.
I'm out of my mind
I dream of your kiss
Chasing you all over
You don't know I exist.**

I follow every day
Watch you out of your door.
Chase you to the laundry
Stalk you to the store.
Don't eat those greasy onion rings
They're no good for you.
Wonder if you've seen me
Wonder if you knew:

Chorus
Instrumental embellishment
Chorus

Some day I'm going to meet you
I'll say hello
I know you'll love me
That's my goal.
Some day I'll stand in front of you
'Stead of chasing from behind.

Hoping you won't say:
"Boy, you're out of your mind!"

Chorus

Homemade Beer © 1992 by R.A. Gramann

When I was still a little boy
An explosion down below,
Woke me in the middle of the night,
With a smell I didn't know.
I ran down to the basement.
Broken glass was everywhere.
That's when I learned
About homebrew beer.

My Dad brewed up five gallons
With mail-order stuff.
He stored it in glass bottles,
Screwed the tops on good enough.
Put in a bit more sugar
Just to carbonate it more,
And the pressure blew those bottles
Cross the floor.

**Oh, I love to drink
That homemade beer.
In the basement,
I can make it through the year.
Hops and yeast and barley malt
Make the drink that we revere
Oh, I love to drink
That homemade beer.**

Start collecting long neck bottles
If you want to make some brew.
Get yourself some John Bull malt,
Some hops and ale yeast, too.
Simmer hops and malt together,
Cool it, pour it in the vat,
And let that beer wort ferment
Nearly flat.

Siphon into bottles,
The dregs rise if you pour.
Carefully stamp on the caps.
Find a cool dark place to store.
Don't be too impatient
Can't drink it till its time
Age that beer three weeks
It's in its prime.

chorus

Instrumental break

Handed down through generations:
My Grand Dad made it, too.
Even ancient Sumerians
Mixed up a little brew.
And when my boy gets old enough
I'm gonna teach him, too.
Gonna keep up the tradition:
Homemade beer.

Chorus

Best of Friends ©1998 R.A.Gramann

Thursday morning rainfall
East side of the mountains
Drops form into rivulets
And gullies into streams.
Sun was high on Monday
When swirling Thursday's water
Rode the river past the town
But the river's still with me.

**River stays beside me
Though the water's always changing.
Waters blend, Best of friends.
Best friends last all life.**

Want to finish 'fore the night falls.
Start early in the morning.
I'll carry up the shingles
You hammer, then we'll trade.
Side by side, we work along
Words that matter weave among
Our patter through the heat and sun,
My best friend's here with me.

**We've stood so long together
Though we both are always changing.
Like waters blend, Best of friends.
Best friends last all life.**

*Round my body like a favorite chair
Wrinkles, folds, familiar air
Details no one wants to know
Each day I love you even more.*

Dusted by the grey sprite
Just another milestone overnight.
Memories from my childhood
Don't seem so long ago.
Yet every day, you're someone new.

Each day, I fall in love with you.
More certain than the sky is blue
You'll be my friend for life.
We've stood so long together
Though we both are always changing.
Best of friends, Next-of-kin.
Best friends last all life.

Thursday morning rainfall
East side of the mountains
Drops form into rivulets
And gullies into streams.
Sun was high on Monday
When swirling Thursday's water
Rode the river past the town
But the river's still with me.

River stays beside me
Though the water's always changing.
Like waters blend, Best of friends.
Best friends last all life.

Best of friends, Next-of-kin.
We'll be best friends for life.