

Out of Time © 2006 by R.A. Gramann

Kathleen and Porter planned/To raise a family
Their twenty-five children/Would be named from A-to-Z.
They were pretty tired at Larry/So, they named the 12th Zoe.
She was the last because/They're running out of time.

Out of time, Out of time

Another dawn, another midnight

Them days and weeks go flyin'.

Search all the cracks and cupboards

No more minutes will you find.

But do it fast, you know

We're running out of time.

Face that spans the generations/Family portraits prove it so.

We can guess how hunger, warmth and love/Felt so long ago.

Forever's not a promise/It's just something that I know.

Do it fast, you know/We're running out of time.

I wrote your name it concrete./Doesn't hurt like a tattoo.

A permanent reminder of/My persistent love for you.

I'd love you for a lifetime/But we didn't meet till school.

Please love me now/We're running out of time.

Glaciers disappearing,/codfish nearly gone

Humans getting crowded,/Mideast sects don't get along.

We've only got one earth to save, no other to live on.

Do it fast you know/ We're running out of time.

The Evening After Tom Died ©2007 by R.A. Gramann

There's stuff you know

And stuff you don't

And stuff that makes no sense.

The evening after Tom died,

I turned off the TV news.

Tragedies are too personal,

To share with strangers on the tube.

Go searching for trouble

And trouble's what you'll find.

But what do you do when trouble finds you

And there's no place on earth to hide?

He was my age.

You know it happened all so fast.

He didn't know in the morning,

That day would be his last.

What would he do different

If he only knew?

If today were your last on earth,

What's important enough to do?

In the days after Tom died

Can't help thinking about myself

So easy to see, how it could have been me,

How chance squanders good health.

I know that the stars shine

All day behind the sun

And that there might be other things I can't see

But I miss him since he's gone.

Shock and trauma

Instead of shock and awe.

Collect all the limbs, reassemble the men

Send the wreckage home from war.

How'd we let it happen

You'd think by now we'd learn

Stick your hand in the conflagration

Expect that you'll get burned.

In the years since Tom died,

I've learned to love each day

I splash around when the rains come down

Sometimes I just play.

Been hoarding each minute

I get to spend with the ones I love.

Every day's such a beautiful day

Cause I know there won't be enough .

Sara Sing © 2002 by R.A. Gramann

Sara, sing about the mountains

About the beauty of each day.

Play us tunes of love and fortunes.

Sing of places far away.

I don't know why I stopped that morning.

Yard sales aren't my kind of thing.

Accumulations of a lifetime,

Displayed to sell for what they'd bring.

Pots and pans and plates and glasses.

They said, "He's gone. He won't need those."

Shirts and books, old vinyl records,

Shoes and pants, and winter clothes.

Leaning there against the table

Cracked and scarred, it's neck askew.

On the peghead it said, "Sara."

A strange guitar, not one I knew.

I surely didn't need another.

Eight guitars might be enough.

Impulsively, I gave her twenty.

Number nine looked pretty rough.

I examined Sara on my workbench.

She was once a fine guitar.

I cleaned the joints, reglued the braces.

Fixed the neck, touched up the scars.

Scarcely were the strings upon her,

An unfamiliar tune sang out.

It drew my fingers to the fretboard.

What the hell was this about?

First, we played an Irish jig

Though no Irish songs I knew.

Then my fingers plucked a hornpipe.

Then we played some blues.

I recognized a theme from Bach

As the notes when flying by.

Tunes I'd never played before

From my fingers they did fly.

Sara played the most beautiful music

Astounding words sang in my voice.

All the songs I sang before

Compared to this, they seemed like noise.

It's hard to claim a yard sale box

Could make me what I am today.

Unless you'd heard me sing before,

You won't believe me anyway.

All my life, I've notcooked much.

No great meals came from my hands.

Now, whenever I think of Sara,

I wish I'd bought those pots and pans.

It's Play That Makes You Young

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I used to be a small child
I used to have my fun
I'd love to play like that again
It's play that makes you young.
It's play that makes you young.
Like running barefoot in the mud
Rolling in the grass
Splashing in the puddles
Sliding on my butt.
It's play that makes you young.
I'd throw dirt clods at my sister
She'd throw 'em back at me
We'd scream and run all over the yard
Then climb the willow tree.
It's play that makes you young.
Sneak out the upstairs window
Scoot across the roof
Jump down into a pile of leaves
The landing it was rough
It's play that makes you young.
Pump the swing as high as the bar
Jump into outer space.
Slide on cardboard down the hill
Then up the hill we'd race.
It's play that makes you young.
Scream in the tunnel in the park
Pee high on the wall
Play hide and seek after dark
In the drain pipes we would crawl
It's play that makes you young.
*Think it's strange to see a grown man
Sitting in a tree
Spitting watermelon seeds?
Look out below, it's me!*
Youth is fleeting then it's gone
It's not the same with fun
Immaturity can last forever
It's play that makes you young
It's play that makes you young.

I'll Probably Do It Again ©2005 by R.A. Gramann

Down through the generations
We never went to jail.
We're fine, upstanding citizens,
Our honor's not for sale.
Taught to think and do what's right
And let the truth prevail
I did it, I'm proud of it
And I'll probably do it again
Two folks could see the same thing and
Disagree 'bout what they saw.
With deeply held convictions
They could argue their throats raw.
Free speech may be messy
But it lets the truth prevail.
I did it, I'm proud of it
And I'll probably do it again
So when our leaders set a path
To bring our land to ruin.

I felt compelled to disagree
Their motives to repugn.
To argue isn't traitorous
The truth it will prevail.
I did it, I'm proud of it
And I'll probably do it again
If you get a permit
You admit that you're not free.
The sidewalk at the White House
Where everyone can see
Is where I chose to state my case
So let the truth prevail.
I did it, I'm proud of it
And I'll probably do it again
Cold metal of the handcuffs
Clamped hard around my wrists.
Land of the free just rhetoric
It's finally come to this
They can't silence everyone of us
So let the truth prevail.
I did it, I'm proud of it
And I'll probably do it again
Now my life's behind me
I'll admit I went to jail.
When what's right is against the law
It's the law that has to fail
I'm proud I made a difference
I helped the truth prevail.
I did it
I'm proud of it
And I'll probably do it again

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.

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.

You're Nothing But a Pack of Neurons

©1992 by R.A. Gramann

*You're nothing but a pack of neurons
In a shapely bag of goo.*

*All your thoughts and dreams,
Your hopes and schemes
Are electro-chemical, too.*

*You are what you eat,
From your head to your feet,
So watch out what you chew.*

*You're nothing but a pack of neurons,
But I'm in love with you oo oo,
I'm in love with you.*

The first time I ever saw your face, dear,
My ions began to diffuse.

Your eyes aglow
Made my sodium flow
Through those membrane avenues.

When our fingers unite,
More than synapses excite,
And your lips I can't refuse.

I know we're more than just a chemical reaction,
Cause I'm in love with you oo oo,
I'm in love with you.

*You're nothing but a pack of neurons
Controlling a bag of goo.*

*All your thoughts and dreams,
Your hopes and schemes
Are electro-chemical, too.*

*You are what you eat,
'Cept for what you excrete,
So watch out what you chew.*

*You're nothing but a pack of neurons,
But I'm in love with you oo oo,
I'm in love with you.*

I'd like to know how my fondest memories
Are stored in hydrocarbon slime.

I can see your face,
Feel your warm embrace,

Or just think of you any time.
Four million years of evolution,
But we only get one lifetime.
Let's go and mix our chromosomes together,
Cause I'm in love with you oo oo,
I'm in love with you.

Rappahannock Running Free

© 1993, 2004 by R. A. Gramann

Again, the eagle beats his wings
To climb above the trees
Over the locks on the Rappahannock
What's left of history.
Where the Council and the contractors
Over quality disagreed.
Where the present meets the past
And some things never change.
*For a man can only hold
A piece of earth
For a lifetime.*

*Water leaks through fingers
You can't hold it at all.
I love the Rappahannock
And its water running free.*

*In the rapids of this river,
That's where I want to be.*

From Carter's Run at Waterloo
It drops three hundred feet.

Forty-seven locks in fifty miles
1849 complete.

With first year's drought and railroads
So quickly obsolete.

A canal system for just four years
And history ever since.

An aqueduct and wood crib dam
Fed power to the mills,

And factories and tanneries
The foundations are there still.

The concrete dam in 1910
Electric generators until

Only forty years ago
And now a poor man's home.

Poison ivy coats the bank
Where we climbed around the dam.

A century and a half of portages
Canoes across the land.

The damn dam blocked the spawning fish
Flooded rapids behind the span.

In 2004, we blew it up
We didn't need for that dam.

The government and the spawning fish
Conspired to blow the dam.

When the whole town came together
The concrete couldn't stand.

Now the Rappahannock
Will forever run so free

All the way from Chester Gap
No boundaries to the sea.

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.

The Battle of the Squirrel and the CEO

© 1992 by R.A. Gramann

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.
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.

Manny's Wildlife and Rehabilitation Camp

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When the dozers scrape a woodland clear
 To build another store
 Who'll raise the orphaned fox kits
 When their home is there no more?
 No bonds are kept for wildlife
 Refugees from native turf
 No state money, no protection
 For true owners of the earth.
*How we treat the least among us
 How we bargain for ourselves
 How we listen for the voiceless
 How we guard the planet's health.
 We are all in this together
 Of the smallest be aware*

*From meadow skink to mighty king
 We walk on dirt and breathe the air*
But then there's
 Manny's Wildlife and Rehab Camp
 Where the smallest are secure.
 Where does and kits and voles and skunks
 Can hide to mend their fur.
 Where mange is the conquered enemy
 Where orphans learn to hunt
 Where the wild's preserved in wildlife
 Mended, nurtured one by one
 She's not needed to help beagles
 But who else can save the _____?
 Don't bring her kittens in a box
 But she knows how to cure a _____.
 It's generally not her habit
 But she'll try to fix a _____.
 The camp's mission is quite clear
 Nurse back to health an injured _____.
Eating trash by
 The light of the moon
 In your yard
 It's a bold _____
 All the gardeners want to harm it
 No one else could love a _____.
 Keep the fauna fit, the flora bloomin'
 Or the world's not safe for _____.

Austin Healy Bugeyed Sprite © 2007 by R.A. Gramann

House stood empty for a long time
 Before Marie moved in.
 I ran right over to meet her
 With my "Howdy Neighbor" grin.
 Maybe she was kinda shy
 Or I'm just not her kind of guy
 Cause though it was deep in May
 I felt the January wind.
 I'd probably let it go at that
 If she didn't have that car.
 A '59 Bugeye Sprite
 With them tiny SU carbs
 I had one back when I was young
 I remember the walking, I remember the fun
 All those happy memories
 Sitting in her yard.
Oh, Marie, Won't you take me for a ride
Oh, Marie, Would you let me drive?
Oh, Marie, I've watched you for so long.
Oh, Marie, Would you take me along?
I watched her from my window
 As she tuned those tiny carbs.
 Smoky sputter turned to a buzz
 From the tailpipe of that car.
 Then she jumped behind the wheel
 Around the block her small tires squealed
 On every corner that July night
 A test drive not too far.
By August I got it figured out
 It wasn't about that Sprite.
 I was smitten with Marie
 And how she tuned that car just right.

These months I'd watched her come and go,
 As I sat by the window with my banjo,
 Pickin' at the courage to walk across
 And ask her for that ride.
"Curse the Prince of Darkness"
 A shout rang through the night.
 I knew that I would have to help
 I ran over with my light.
 She twisted wires back in the trunk
 Slammed it with a clank not a clunk,
 Turned the key, the lights came on
 Once more she fixed it right.
 Then, in the dark she turned to me
 And thanked me for my torch.
 "Go back and get your banjo
 Come play it on my porch."
 I've listened to your banjo ring
 Every day you've watched me since the spring
 Wishing you'd come over
 And play a little more.
Driving River Road in her Bugeye Sprite
 Hair blowing in her eyes.
 In that little seat beside her
 Is where I get to ride.
 On those gravel curves, I'd grab the dash
 Feel the washboard road up through my spine
 Feel the wind on the back of my neck
 And feeling mighty fine.

When I Grow Up © 2001 by R.A. Gramann

When I grow up,
 I want to be a cowboy.
 Yodel.
 Cowboy does what he wants to do
 Sleeps under the stars
 Rides across the open range
 With his horse and guitar.
 Spends his hard-earned money
 In smokey cowboy bars.
 Cowboy, that's the life for me
The All American Hero
Is independent and free
 Yodel.
You might be thinkin' John Wayne,
Well, I'm thinkin' it's me.
 Yodel.
 When I grow up,
 I wanna be a 300 pound Gorilla.
 Yodel.
 He does what he wants to do
 Sleeps wherever he wants.
 Impresses all the ladies
 With his gestures and grunts.
 Roams throughout the jungle.
 It's fruits and berries that he hunts
 Gorilla, that's the life for me.
The All American Hero
Is independent and free
 Yodel.
You might be thinkin' King Kong,

Well, I'm thinkin' it's me.

Yodel.

When I grow up,
I wanna be a politician.

Yodel.

He does what he wants to do.
Tries not to get caught.
Makin' promises and kissing babes,
Thinks he's really hot.
Serving some constituents
Claiming he's not bought.
Politician, that's the life for me.

When I grow up,
I want to be a CPA.

Yodel//Nunt uh?

The All American Hero

Is independent and free

Yodel.

You might be thinkin' Barack Obama,

Well, I'm thinkin' it's me.

Yodel.

When I grow up,
I want to be a folksinger.

Yodel

Folksinger does what he wants to do
Sleeps until 10,
Sings till after midnight
Writes songs now and then
Never has much money
Doesn't matter to him
Folksinger, that's the life for me.

The All American Hero

Is independent and free

Yodel.

You might be thinkin' Bob Gramann,

Well, I'm thinkin' it's me.

Yodel.

Company of Friends © 2008 by Danny Schmidt

When I die, let them judge me by my company of friends
Let them know me as the footprints that I left upon the sand
Let them laugh for all the laughter
Let them cry for laughter's end
But when I die, let them judge me by my company of friends.

When I die, let them toast to all the things I believe
Let them raise a glass to consciousness
And not spill a drop for grief
Let the bubbles rise at midnight
Let their tongues be light as thieves
And when I die, let them toast to all the things I believe

I believe in restless hunger

I believe in red balloons

I believe in private thunder

In the end I do believe

I believe in inspriation

I believe in lightning bugs

I believe in slow creation

In the end I do believe

I believe in ink on paper

I believe in lips on ears

I believe in what's shared is savored

In the end I do believe

I believe in work on Sundays

I believe in raising barns

I believe in wasting Mondays

In the end I do believe

I believe in intuition

I believe in being wrong

I believe in contradiction

In the end I do believe

I believe in living smitten

I believe all hearts will mend

I believe our book is written

By our company of friends

Generations

© 2001 by R.A. Gramann

Sailing ships and horses formed

The shape of this old river town.

It's what it is 'cause of what it was,

And the roads still wind around.

A crooked smile, a wink, a nod

From grand-dad through my son.

Gestures, stories, skills, and hopes,

Some habits passed along.

And a love so strong

I feel like I've earned it.

Linking generations with

Old stories and names.

I'll have to pass it on

That's how to return it.

The magic of a family's love

Warmer than the brightest flames.

"Get your elbows off the table!"

Mom yelled day after day.

We tried hard not to listen

All we wanted was to play.

"Take the time to do it right"

She'd say again and again.

Things you want your kids to know

Just take time to sink in.

And a love so strong

They'll feel like they've earned it.

Linking generations with

Old stories and names.

They'll have to pass it on

That's how to return it.

The magic of a family's love

Warmer than the brightest flames.

I've got my granddad's violin

She's got her father's nose.

It might be hard to recognize

What's left of long agos.

Overlap of generations

That's all the time we get

To know our kids or parents

Let's not waste it on regret.

We need a love so strong

We feel like we've earned it.

Linking generations with

Old stories and names.

*We'll have to pass it on
That's how to return it.
The magic of a family's love
Warmer than the brightest flames.*

I've thought it over carefully
There's this lesson I can tell:
No matter what else you do,
Pick your parents well.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

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Every year we gather here
Beside the Rappahannock
We fuel ourselves with crabs and beer
And bid upon the knick-knacks.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

Till the water runs clear.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

Now the river runs free.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

For the fish and the deer.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

More crabs for me!

Don't be shy, just jump right in
And Whack with your crab hammer.
Give a smile and have some fun
And add to all the clamor.
The army came and blew the dam
We watched from the banks.
To all you folks who brought it down,
We give you many thanks.
To Chester Gap the fish did swim
When we blew the dam that year.
They schooled up with mountain sex
It's a shame that fish can't cheer.

Every year we gather here
At the fairgrounds so romantic.
We fuel ourselves with crabs and beer
To preserve the Rappahannock.

Gravity © 1993 by R.A. Gramann

When gravity
No longer holds you down
In a dream,
You float through the sky.
Past poles and wires
Over roofs and yards
Trying to swim back down
Yelling below to people you know.
Laws of nature
Don't seem to hold anymore.
Time can't keep
All things from happening at once.
An ugly baby,
Beautiful, full-grown,
Launching from the nest, now
Hair blowing behind you
You're on your own.

We all need time to wonder

*We need time to sit and stare
At the stars, clouds, and people,
And birds soaring through the air.*

When gravity

No longer holds you down

You've come of age,

It's time to fly.

Your dreams will lift you high

Your dreams make the universe

What it might be

When you build your dreams,

Build a room for me.

When gravity

No longer holds you down

You've come of age,

It's time to fly.