**POETRY SUBMISSION BELOW-Mp3 Files Available/Some Poetry Photos/Open to Interview Requests.**  **Short Bio & Photos, Audio Available for All Poems on Request. PoetrySh152-The New & the Old Poems (Grammarly Checked 08-29-23).  451 words/3,058 characters, minus bio and address.**

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**M**ichael Lee Johnson lived ten years in Canada during the Vietnam era. Today he is a poet in the greater Chicagoland area, IL. He has 294 YouTube poetry videos. Michael Lee Johnson is an internationally published poet in 45 countries, a song lyricist, has several published poetry books, has been nominated for 6 Pushcart Prize awards, and 6 Best of the Net nominations. He is editor-in-chief of 3 poetry anthologies, all available on Amazon, and has several poetry books and chapbooks. He has over 453 published poems. Michael is the administrator of 6 Facebook Poetry groups. Member Illinois State Poetry Society: <http://www.illinoispoets.org/>.  **Remember to consider me for Best of the Net or Pushcart nomination!**

**Ghost I Am** (V2)

By Michael Lee Johnson

**H**ere is a private hut

staring at me,

twigs & branches

over the top—

naked & alone.

## I respond to an old 60s doo-wop

song: In the Still of the Night

Fred Parris and The Satins.

Storms are written in narratives,

old ears closed to a full hearing.

I’m but a shelter cringing.

In age, nightmare pre-warned redemption.

Let’s call it the Jesus factor,

not LGBT symbols in Biden’s world.

I lost my way close to the end.

Here is this shelter in heaven

poetry imagined spaces

prematurely still not all the words fit,

in childhood in abuse

lack of reason for bruises

rough hills, carp that didn’t bite,

and Schwinn bike rides

flat tires, chains fall off, spokes collapse—

this thunder, those storms.

Find me a thumbnail

image of myself in centuries of dust.

Stand weakened by nature

of change glossed over, sealed.

Archives.

Old men, like a luxurious battery,

die hard, but with years, they

too, fade away.

**California Summer** (V2)

By Michael Lee Johnson

**C**oastal warm breeze

off Santa Monica, California

the sun turns salt

shaker upside down

and it rains white smog, a humid mist.

No thunder, no lightening,

nothing else to do

except for sashay

forward into liquid

and swim

into eternal days

like this.

**Four Leaf Clover**(V5)

By Michael Lee Johnson

**I** found your life smiling

inside a four-leaf clover.

Here you hibernate in sin.

You were dancing in the orange fields of the sun.

You lock into your history, your past, withdrawal,

taste honeycomb, then cow salt lick.

All your life, you have danced in your soft shoes.

Find free lottery tickets in the pockets of poor men and strangers.

Numbers rhyme like winners, but they are just losers.

Positive numbers tug like gray blankets, poor horses coming in 1st.

Private angry walls; desperate is the night.

You control intellect, josser men.

You take them in, push them out,

circle them with silliness.

Everything turns indigo blue in grief.

I hear your voice, fragmented words in thunder.

An actress buried in degrees of lousy weather and blindness.

I leave you alone, wander the prairie path by myself.

Pray for wildflowers, the simple types. No one cares.

Purple colors, false colors, hibiscus on guard,

lilacs are freedom seekers, now no howls in death.

You are the cookie crumble of my dreams.

Three marriages in the past.

I hear you knocking my walls down, heaven stars creating dreams.

Once beautiful in the rainbow sun, my face, even snow

now cast in banners, blank, fire, and flames.

I cycle a self-absorbed nest of words.

**Casket of Love (V3)**

**By Michael Lee Johnson**

**T**his moon, clinging to a cloudless sky,

offers the light by which we love.

In this park, grass knees high, tickling bare feet,

offers the place we pass pleasant smiles.

Sir Winston Churchill would have

saluted the stately manner this fog lifts,

marching in time across this pond

layering its ghostly body over us

cuddled by the water’s edge,

as if we are burdened by this sealed

casket called love.

Frogs in the marsh, crickets beneath the crocuses

trumpet the last farewell.

A flock of Canadian geese flies overhead

in military V formation.

Yet how lively your lips tremble

against my skin in a manner no

sane soldier dare deny.