



Paul Dickey, a native Kansan (born in Hardtner, KS, in 1948 and grew up in Wichita), began publishing poetry in the 1970s while a student at Wichita State University. At this time, he published in *Kansas Quarterly* (Kansas State University), *Karamu* (Eastern Illinois University), *Quartet* (Texas A&M University), and *Nimrod* (University of Tulsa). Dickey was studying the writing of poetry and fiction as a graduate student at W.S.U, primarily with Bienvenido Santos in the formulative and early years of the W.S.U. MFA program.

In 1980, Dickey left the W.S.U. MFA program and took a hiatus from writing while concentrating on family and a career as a data processing professional. In 1985, he moved his family to Omaha. Dickey started to publish again in 2003. Since then, he has published poetry, creative non-fiction and fiction in about 100 literary journals, including many nationally known and highly respected ones, such as *Pleiades*, *The Bellevue Literary Review*, *Sentence*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Potomac Review*, *Memoir (and)*, *Hampden-Sydney Poetry Review*, *Midwest Quarterly*, *Rattle*, *The Laurel Review*, and many others both print and online.

Paul Dickey's first full-length book of poems, *They Say This is How Death Came Into the World* was published by Mayapple Press in January, 2011. A second book, *Wires Over the Homeplace* will be published by Pinyon Publishing this fall.

Dickey's first poetry chapbook *What Wisconsin Took* (the state where his daughter had moved with her husband) was published by the Parallel Press, University of Wisconsin Libraries - Madison in May, 2006. Two other chapbooks have been finalists in national competitions – *Images of Knowing* (The Comstock Review, 2005) and *They Say This is How Death Came Into the World* (Red Mountain Review, 2005 & Black Lawrence Press, 2007) . Dickey's poetry has been anthologized in *An Introduction to the Prose Poem* (Firewheel Editions, 2009) and *Nebraska Presence: An Anthology of Poetry* (Backwaters Press, 2007).

Dickey has a Bachelor degree from Wichita State University and a Master of Arts degree from Indiana University, Bloomington, in the History and Philosophy of Science. He is married and has three adult children, one grandson, and one granddaughter. Retired from his data processing career, he now teaches philosophy in Omaha, Nebraska at Metropolitan Community College. In the past four years, Dickey has broadened his writing efforts to include playwriting and has written several one-act and one full-length play, *The Good News According to St. Dude*. He travels frequently to give readings throughout the Midwest. He recently returned to Wichita State for a reading and will be at Pittsburg State College for their Distinguished Visiting Writers Series in February, 2013.

Samples of poems appear on following pages

Wheat State Salvation

And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.
Matthew 14:28,29 (King James Version)

In vacant lots in Kansas, we walk on
wheat-colored weeds, not water;
taste dust kicked up from shoes; cough up
a child's guilt that stuck in the throat

like popcorn husks. Dad preached: *To the world,
we are just an old movie to go see every time
it comes to town, but under our canvas tonight,
the Lord is present.* Mosquitoes preyed.

Flies buzzed, circled overhead on bare light bulbs,
settled on the light, old ladies with flowered,
hand fans. The tribulations of Job, not
ecstasies of apostles, inflated our faith.

Dad and Mom worked the aisles, talked
to brothers and sisters from churches
across the state. I did not dare miss one word
of grown-up talk of how much I'd grown.

Uncle Fred's headlights surrounded the tent,
shining the spotlight. *There is room at the cross.
The Holy Ghost is moving.* I pledged fifty cents
a month – half a week's allowance –

for the work of God. Teen-age cousins dedicated
their lives to Christ. Going home, I'd fall asleep
memorizing scriptures, with a vision for sinners
being forgiven, hearing my words.

Dad's church now is all weeds, thirty years of dust.
Tonight in a lot across town where last week
cousins sold firecrackers, folks still come
to the altar – *just as I am.*

I hear a voice that sounds so like my own,
it must be Someone Else. It calls me out,
this time to be the cripple and throw away
the crutches on which I learned to walk.

From *They Say This is How Death Came Into the World*, Mayapple Press, 2011. Appeared in *Rattle* #29, Summer, 2008. An earlier version of "Wheat State Salvation" appeared as "Salvation/Wheat State Camp Meeting" in *Quartet*, Vol. VII, #56, Fall, 1976.

Lazarus, Visiting Kansas

"So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'
Luke 16:24

When she runs out of people to visit,
she visits the headstones. There is family
all along I-70 from Salina to Hays –
Uncle Rudy with his shirt off in the fields
plowing on his John Deere. That day
in 1966, Aunt Betty wouldn't stop
to give him a drink of water for the way
he looked. He didn't appear a good
Christian man and certainly no brother
of hers. Today she would donate a thousand
bucks to hell to give him a drink of water,
make him the richest man in the family
no longer alive. Her back stooped, she pours
water as if out of her eyes, to fill the vase
and keep alive the goldenrod and tansy
she clipped by the roadside. And off she goes
to visit Aunt Ruth, not knowing anymore
whether the people are here or they're gone.

From *Wires Over the Homeplace*, Pinyon Publishing, 2013. Appears online at *Diode*, Vol. 5, No. 3, Fall, 2012.

Sister Lyons and the Gospel

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.... hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

1 Corinthians 1:18-20 (KJV)

Tuesdays at four on KRFM, she exhaled sacred texts
and metaphor. She discerned prophecy from rhyme.
Her voice was the Lord's mighty rushing wind,
huffing all God's news into 12 minutes, saving three
to close with a prayer in tongues. *Just to spite the Devil*,
she'd say. After school let out, I'd drive 35 miles
to Newton and bring her home. In the car, Grandma
talked about biscuits and gravy, things I understood.

How Grandpa said her name, it rhymed with glory:
Clorie has a calling from the Lord. He told me to stay
in school, then he split for heaven. She sold
the house that cost him 10 hours a day for 40 years.
She got 15 minutes a week for 6 months. Rather
than take her home to another fight with Mom,
I wanted to eat biscuits and gravy in her kitchen
forever, give thanks that the Lord's work and all that
foolishness was not broadcast to the Wichita I knew.

From *Wires Over the Homeplace*. Pinyon Publishing, 2013.
First appeared in *Concho River Review*, Fall/Winter 2011.

For Almost a Year, I Stopped Living

Jimmy was staying overnight. Dad had picked us up after the freezing high school football game. At first, mom's cocoa was too hot to drink, but it cooled off while Jimmy and I took turns guessing a girl's name. We fell asleep eventually on the army cots mom had set up in my room.

I awoke when the phone rang, but only heard pieces of the broken and jagged-edged night it had been for someone. *Paul, we need to take Jimmy home, NOW.* Mom had started calling me "Paul" just the last year or so. And I liked it. It sounded more grown-up. Many in the family though still called me "Eddie Paul." Mom's face was a dish rag. She tried to tell me something. At Jimmy's house, I told him – "see you at school Monday" but from the tone of what was going on I didn't know now if trivial things like that would ever matter again.

It's Ronnie, Dad at last managed to say. Hit by a car walking home from the football game. Aunt Leta and Uncle Floyd have been up at St. Francis all night. They need rest. He's in a coma. I wasn't sure what a coma was. I didn't know if it meant that Ronnie was going to die. I had hundreds of questions, but none seemed right to ask. I agreed not to understand.

At the hospital, I was sent home with Grandpa Drake where Grandma made me homemade biscuits with sausage gravy. I studied the pictures on her wall that I had never really looked at before. Dad was Uncle Floyd's brother. Aunt Leta was Mom's sister. You see, Ronnie and I shared two sets of grandparents. We even went to the same school. We were exactly the same age, so we were as near brothers as you could be and not be twins.

Ronnie was unconscious for five months. Basketball wasn't the same without me feeding him passes and our returning high fives. Ronnie was the athlete in the family. I knew it was the last year I would be good enough to make the team.

Then luck finally turned my way again. I drew Nancy Saul to walk with me down the aisle at eighth grade graduation. Eight months ago, I had not dared to say her name to Jimmy. "Next year," I kept saying to myself, "I will be in high school and I'm going to run for Freshman class president." I wanted my grandparents to see me with the prettiest girl in the school. I looked over to the bleachers. Nobody was there. Ronnie could not be, so the whole family could not. Where my parents were supposed to be there sat two stone statues.

That summer and for the second time in his life, Ron spoke his first words. For some reason, we started calling him that. Maybe out of respect. He had best case a full year of rehab ahead, his doctor said. Mom had taken off work to drive Aunt Leta and Ron to the appointment. "And all Eddie Paul is doing with himself," Ron's mother said somewhat sarcastically and angrily to Mom going home, "is starting high school."

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