The image is a book cover with a red border. The background is a photograph of a winter scene. In the foreground, there are bare, dark branches with a few brown leaves. In the middle ground, there is a snow-covered field or path. In the background, there are several tall, thin trees, possibly pines or cypresses, standing against a pale, overcast sky. The overall tone is quiet and serene.

**about Seasons—the Wind  
and Weather of Our Days:**

*Celebrating Fear  
and Feeling Alive*

by  
**Robert Nichols**

about Seasons—the Wind and  
Weather of Our Days:

Celebrating Fear and Feeling Alive

by

Robert Nichols

## NOTE:

*about Seasons—  
the Wind and Weather  
of Our Days*  
and several other works,  
are available as eBooks through a variety  
of distributors throughout the world.

Also,  
there is a limited number of spiral-bound  
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**Other Works by Robert Nichols,**  
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## **The Footlocker Series** *"A Lifetime of Art"*

**Published Works**

*about Time: Poems and Other Stories (2015)*  
*about Mountain Living: Finding a Way (2015)*

*about Seasons—the Wind and Weather  
of Our Days: Celebrating Fear and Feeling Alive*  
by Robert Nichols  
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## **Dedication**

To Carol Nichols whose belief, heart, and  
energy are given to the gathering  
and production of these books—  
she collects my poetry and lore and thought  
and  
makes me real.

Thank you, Love.

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## Introduction

*I'll start this with a bit of recollection and give a hint of relevance to these most primal of elements—weather and winds and waters and all—the context of our sublime journeys through mundane moments.*

But first... just to get the mood:

### **The Lullaby of Mother Mist**

In the lowlands  
the night airs thicken to fog—  
fog is song of Mother Mist,  
a lullaby to safely settle  
her scattered children.

## Road-Prayer Companions

For years, alone, I drove the highways of the Great Plains at least once a year, often more times, from Colorado back to my parents' home in Northern Virginia, and then, later, just to my dad's. Sometimes my family would travel with me, but usually, alone.

And proudly, I can say:

Seldom bored.  
Though driving  
the same pavement,  
never the same mile traversed.  
Sky,  
storm,  
wind-dust tint,  
hint of infinity—  
never the same.

And sometimes I would chant-sing meditation and prayer as I drove.

And sometimes I would be joined by Old Spirits as I journeyed on toward ever-elusive horizons. Old Spirits in the form of the Native people who once dwelled throughout this land. Or just faceless presences, or invisible and silent voices harmonizing and empowering the song. And there were times when I would just be still and listen to them.

You might think I'm nuts conversing with apparitions and spooky shadows. Maybe you're right. But spirits and other ethereal entities are common to most all beliefs. I'm not the only one talking to ghosts.

And the nature of these chants and prayers...

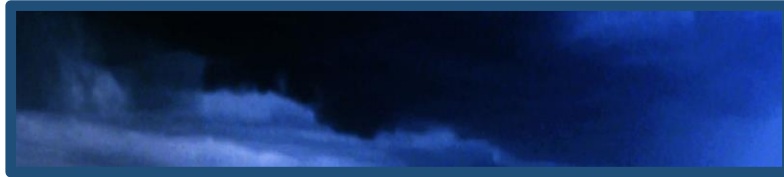
The abbot of a Himalayan Buddhist monastery wrote that the essence of prayer is not what we say. It is what we feel. My sweet mother taught my sister Nancy and me only half of the standard bedtime prayer: "Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep... Amen." She would have nothing of the wicked, death-threat-and-damnation chant of "If I die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." She knew the stuff of good dreams and happy children and took the fire-and-brimstone right out of the love of God. Forget the text, our prayer was all about sweet rest and safety.

So, sometimes as I pray-chanted the miles, a solitary singer to the immensity of Universe through which I passed, I would speak clear words of distance and—*oh, Vastness; oh, sky, oh, clouds and colors / heavens, winds and emptiness.* There were laughing pleas for a McDonald's to appear at the next exit, and tear-wrenched truths of death and beauty. Just poems, you know. Poems for the Gods to harbor in their Consciousness.

But, mostly, knowing the abbot's truth, my chants were not words, they were repetitions of sounds and vibrations driven by the unutterable passion of my soul. Sometimes there were hours and hundreds of miles of the clarity and intensity of a no-word song from Earth to the Infinite. My monastery: an '81 Datsun hatchback (they called it salmon; I called it pink)—30-miles-per gallon, 75-mph liberation into super-conscious meditation.

And, yes. There were very special times when they would join me—the Old Spirits. Especially at the nearing of dusk when, as all travelers know, the Great Plains isn't always such a good place to be alone.

*I wrote a poem about such an encounter. Join me, my friend.*



### **I Rode with Old Spirits**

I rode with Old Spirits  
upon the prairie.  
We sang together.

Alone.  
Westward across Kansas  
heading toward infinity,  
I drove the near-empty  
highways into dusk.  
Back roads.  
Straight-lines, rising and falling  
with the swell of the vast soil-sea;  
horizon broken by silhouette silos,  
village church steeples,  
farm trucks,  
tractors heading home...  
distant headlights approaching.

As I often do on such journeys,  
I chanted, howled  
and whispered meditation, prayer,  
celebration, sorrow and laughter—  
sometimes words,  
sometimes just the sounds  
of my searching heart and mind.  
Just a solitary song  
of distance and wonder to fill

the space of hours between gas stops  
and cheeseburger respites.

I knew the coming storm  
and thrilled to the gathering drama  
of wind and rain  
and lightning about me.

I sang to the storm.  
With soul-wide  
open-hearted  
willingness  
I sang and chanted.  
(If you don't give it everything  
you've got,  
you just travel on through the tactile truths  
of nature's embrace—  
you just get wet  
from the rains,  
battered by the winds.  
You miss the gut-real fun and terror of it all.)

I sang to the storm  
and realized I did not sing alone.

It was an old piece of rust  
and reliance I drove.  
Japanese, small, efficient,  
beat-to-hell, and, by God, paid for.  
They had known stallions  
and chariots—  
they had ridden the winds  
that circle the planet.  
But,  
when they joined the song  
we traveled along  
in my timeworn old Datsun  
just fine together.

Old Spirits, they were.  
Old like time itself is old,  
like the enduring essence of years  
is etched with truth,  
wrought by tell of eons  
and the momentum of centuries  
amassed in this forefront moment's  
encounter with the warping forces of now.

Yeah, I imagined them as Elders,  
prairie-leathered  
and gravel-voiced.  
Shaman priests and priestesses of  
ancient and immortal tribes of the wind.  
Maybe.  
I don't know...  
I'm not delusional.  
I didn't see them.  
But, I'll tell you,  
they were there with me  
and with storm wrapped  
about our shoulders like a vast cloak,  
and with woman voice  
and man voice  
and God voice  
whispered and roared,  
they sang within me as we became motion  
and sped toward darkness.

and  
they spoke to me.  
And I need to tell you what they said.  
It matters not if you believe my story.  
It's all poetry anyway.  
What matters is what they told me.  
Yes.  
I need to tell you what they told me



as darkness and tempest and  
emotion overwhelmed me.

They said:  
*We, The Old Ones,  
we too were mortal as are you  
upon this dusk-deepening journey.  
And we knew the wild beauty  
and harshness of flesh and blood  
upon the plains of Earth.*

and  
She said: *I have,  
in wrenching contraction,  
borne babies into this world.  
I have breast-cradled soft-life's first breaths  
and nurtured with my own essence the  
hope of generations.*

and  
He said: *I have,  
as hunter and warrior  
and father and priest...*

and  
they said:  
*As gatherers  
and planters  
and gleaners of the land,  
we have known cycles of starvation and plenty,  
and flesh-love and death-grief.  
And our hearts have swollen  
in sorrow and joy,  
as gatherers  
and planters  
and gleaners of the land  
we have known countless cycles of life...  
and our minds, enriched by beauty,*

*desiccated by drudgery,  
dimmed by time,  
have known the lessons of lifetimes;  
and our wounds have bled  
and our days, thinned by toil and sickness,  
exhausted to final gasp,  
have turned our stories to dust.*

And I thought, "These Spirits, they were just like me."

and  
they knew and said:  
*Just like you, Mortal.  
But cycles of life,  
devoutly, fully experienced,  
are not mere circles—  
they are spirals  
and from the motions of ages  
we may rise.*

Silence settled upon us,  
save the rising  
force of wind and cloud.  
The batter and  
cloaking darkness.

I asked them,  
"Spirits, what can you tell me?  
I see the horizon-bound road before us,  
and I have known much of the mountains  
that rise and the seas that edge this land.  
And love, oh, yes, Immortal Ones,  
I have sensed deep within me  
the bliss and beauty  
of caress and comfort,  
and have known safety  
in the enduring belief of a friend.  
I have seen the waking, wondering

eyes of a child emerging  
into sunshine and billow of cloud,  
and have heard the sweet joy  
of a long-lived soul  
thanking God for the blessing of  
just another new day.  
Even in the ache and sorrow  
of the worst of my experience,  
I cherish these vulnerable times I live.  
Tell me,  
you who have spun clear  
of footfall upon this Earth—  
tell me,  
what do you miss of  
measured breath  
and the finite count of heartbeats?

In a murmur and whim of laughter,  
my invisible companions spoke:  
*Memory is as real as is the life it chronicles.*  
*Consider what you would miss of*  
*your life.*  
*It is so with us.*  
*But, fear not. Time is not sad.*  
*Recollections of blood and pleasure,*  
*touch of mortal journeys...*  
*oh yes, life shall ever be dear.*  
*But never shall it be the stuff of regret.*

So, I dared to ask, what, surely,  
I could not know,  
“Can you tell me  
something of the Immortal Realms  
through which you journey?”

and  
they replied:  
*No.*

Then, with a shudder-gust  
of a crosswind, and a distant rumble  
of cloud-roar,  
they laughed.

Yes, they laughed.  
I need to tell you what they said  
to me,  
but first you should know,  
though they have gathered  
into mystical wonder  
a thousand lifetimes,  
and  
though in awe and fear  
we may imagine them as  
stern-faced prophets of  
mortal failure and doom,  
in fact,  
their laughter is their Truth.

and  
they said:  
*Of course  
we can tell you everything  
you can know—  
and much more  
that you cannot.*

It seemed that, too,  
was hilarious.  
And  
this time,  
the first of many times  
since and onward,  
I laughed with the Gods and their  
Spirits.

I said, "Tell me what you can.  
What of humans who spin lifetimes  
into Spirit?"

*Some become the songs of water,  
some the essence of air—  
as for us,  
We Old Spirits have become the Weather.*

Rain pitched across the windshield,  
wind shook the car,  
lightning broke the night open before us.

"All this, it is You?"

Yes.  
*We are the weather of the Great Plains.  
We gather the winds and mists  
and swirls and voids of  
the whole round world  
and bring them to our homeland,  
to these wilds of open plain  
we assemble torrents and blizzards,  
and gentle showers, and blue-skied calms,  
and grass-swaying breezes.*

A single car  
with headlights streaking the  
wet pavement swished past  
and was lost to the wash of my passing.

"It seems personal, this weather  
you have become."

*Oh, yes.  
Storms are rage,  
sunshine is nourishment,  
rain is life flow,*

*wind is...*

“Wait. Wait.  
I’ve seen prairie towns  
crushed by cyclones.  
I’ve seen droughts brown  
the horizons with futility,  
I’ve seen blizzard-caught cattle  
standing like statues,  
frozen in the fields.  
Storms can be vicious.  
Spirits, are you cruel?”

and  
they replied:  
*We are neither cruel  
nor kind.  
The sum of all weather  
is a blessing!  
The sate of waters  
the stir of winds,  
the lush and stark gifts  
of ever-vibrant powers—  
across the eons  
weather begets beauty.*

“But, Spirits... the tornados,  
the floods...”

In a rush of might that nearly  
stalled the motion of the night,  
with roar of laughter that rattled  
my being with its thunder,  
with arcs of white-blue brilliance  
the blazing bolts blinding in thrill  
and terror,  
my friends, the Spirits who are  
the weather, told me—and this

is what you need to know from me  
of this tale of Spirit and solitude and tempest—

and  
they said (with no malice, no hint of evil  
in their might, no cold and impersonal  
lashing out at my weakness before their storm,  
with the joy of a thousand lifetimes in each  
syllable of their Truth,  
with the Love of Gods  
for the flesh of the living):

*Embrace the seasons with all their extremes,  
embrace the raging waters and the storms  
that gap the skies.*

*Know this, Dear Mortal,  
and this night will tell more than the  
tale of rain and wind and darkness.  
Know the harsh truth of nature  
and feel the clarity of this mortal Blessing  
you call a lifetime.*

And I started to shudder—but, I said—  
and truly, I was afraid.  
“But it can be terrible...”

*We know your fright.  
We, too, experienced the frail beauty,  
the terrible delicacy of life  
lived passionately,  
mortally lived  
before the raging hilarity and danger  
of creation.*

And,  
finally, with a laugh  
that shook the world,  
and somehow made me know  
that I was loved,

they said:  
*Oh, Traveler,*  
*Earth shall never be tame.*  
*Celebrate your fears*  
*and know you are alive!*

and then it was just me,  
small against the vast  
emptiness of land  
and the void left upon  
it by the departed weather.

This is what Spirits told me.  
This is what you should know  
as you relish the turning  
seasons of your life.

The seasons—winds and weather of your days.





So, we (my wife Carol and I) have gathered these poems and essays roughly into sections according to seasons, and waters and mysteries. There is no particular symbolic significance to this—just a device for giving these diverse utterances a place to be assembled and, hopefully, be read.

With most of my work and, I think with most of the endeavors of others *given* to art, message is but a structure upon which to give reason and relevance to the sheer and unapologetic joy of creativity. You know—like a practical answer to the question: Why do we sing? There is truth to my poems but, more so, there is a pleasure in their creation that I hope is known by the hearts of their readers.

## **The Beginning**

I know water pretty well—  
its oceans and mountain rapids,  
its quench,  
its speaking rains.

And, God yes, how I have felt the  
truth of the wind  
in batter and exhilaration,  
as storm's shout,  
as autumn's loamy, leaf-gusting breath.

And light  
and her mysterious sister, darkness... yes.

And I know the glimmer and shadow  
of love,  
and the metallic taste of pain,  
and the curse of fear,  
and the cure of laughter.

I know much  
to have only begun the journey.

## Seasons

### Lines Written in Defiance

Autumn is no dusk,  
nor is spring the morn.  
Each season's unfolding  
is an entity born.

I am no watcher of late afternoon.  
Today is the sunrise,  
the sunset, the moon.



**Spring**

## **Hello, Spring**

Hello, Spring,  
you unborn hope—  
how you pace  
beneath the snow.

(It was the spring of 1964. I was working at a railroad yard in Virginia and writing love letters to Carol who lived in Missouri. This was a poem woven into the text of one of them. A poem that worked just fine—she married me in 1965.)

### **Spring's Coming**

Spring's coming this month.  
I'll build a thousand flowers for you.  
I'll make them out of miles and bring you closer to me.  
This young man's fancy turned months ago—  
what sort of a fiend will spring make of me?

March 3, 1964

## **Patience**

He waits with his senses wide open—  
soul spread to the fickle, chilled day.  
(Snow flurries pass the window  
drifting down from the sky, white-gray.)

And he knows no certain coming  
of the warmth and life it should bring,  
yet he waits with his fortieth March  
for the birth of his fortieth spring.



### **Another Spring Poem**

Another song of morning sun  
and warmth to war the fright.  
Another verse of day's belief  
as cure for ills of night.

Away the darkness demons  
and their haunting of my dreams.  
Away the thought-choked hours  
and their hope-defeating schemes.

Rise high the life-source star of Earth  
and its flame to quell the chill.  
Awake this fine spring morning—  
Oh, rejoice in living still.

**Violets: All I Ever Needed  
to Learn of Religion**

Violets were my first real flowers.  
They had come up in the back yard  
one bright spring morning.  
(I was maybe four years old.)  
They gathered in the grass—  
small and fragile like rabbits  
who think if they don't move  
you won't see them.

"They're so pretty, Mama," I said.  
and... "Who planted them?"  
She answered,  
saying all I would ever  
need to learn of religion.

She told me,  
"God."

