



Unspent Energy

By Darrell Petska

The date they'll replace me is here on the flange:
tomorrow. All year I've kept Senior Haven safe,
not a peep of complaint. The building stands,
yet for all my efforts, I'll be recyclable waste.

I feel great! I might have months left to go.
Maybe Gary in Maintenance will rescue me,
put me to use in a child's toy, a clock or remote.
Look, I get it: places like this need safety

a top priority, but watching these seniors all year
proves old is not necessarily spent: yoga, poetry,
Parcheesi, chess, classes on brewing dandelion beer—
the hair may be gray but the air is high energy.

It's been a privilege to lend them my volts.
I shall go quietly, unless tonight I'm provoked.



A few days before I wrote the poem, I replaced one of our smoke alarm's batteries per the manufacturer's recommended schedule--though the battery still showed some life. I am also working on a short story about active seniors in a nursing home setting (years ago I evaluated nursing home care from a social work perspective). With your call for submissions in mind, I began to see connections. From that point, the poem moved quickly along.

Darrell Petska's writing has appeared in *Verse-Virtual*, *Right Hand Pointing*, *Mobius: The Journal of Social Change*, *Plainsongs*, *Star 82 Review* and numerous other publications. New work will appear shortly in *Chiron Review*, *Bird's Thumb* and elsewhere. Communications editor for many years with the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Darrell left academia to be the arbiter of his own words. He lives in Middleton, Wisconsin.