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SEPTEMBER 14, 2023

The Ancients Ride at Bon Time by Darrell Petska

The chill of their coming your neck hairs sense,
your eyes turning north, your ears perked
to a swelling airborne murmur—

undulating waves of dragonflies, tails autumn-
nipped, cresting the horizon, dipping low to
the hieing of your ancestors riding their backs,

your greats-, great-greats- and greaters-still
crying from their mounts: “What news?
How do you fare? Do you think of us?”

They rush quickly by, familiars to life,
their feet once planted where you now stand,
eyes upturned in reverence and awe,

leaving you to swallow your answers as one
parting plea, like a frost-bitten leaf, falls to earth:
“It’s not too late to change!”

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smile always leads my mind to
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[The Ancients Ride at Bon Time by](#)
Darrell Petska

Distance soon reclaims their cloud,
and small pieces of you tagging along, until—
it must occur thus—

you awaken chilled some late autumn day,
beneath and all about you pulsing
the ancients' gossamer multitude,

familiar adjurations springing now from your lips
as you ride time's back into tomorrow:
"Remember us. Live your life anew!"

Note: *The autumn migration of dragonflies coincides roughly with the annual Japanese Bon Festival and an old belief that ancestral spirits, riding dragonflies like winged mounts, return to visit the living.*

Darrell Petska is a retired university engineering editor. His writing can be found in *Third Wednesday Magazine*, *Verse-Virtual*, *Muddy River Poetry Review* and widely elsewhere (conservancies.wordpress.com). Father of five and grandfather of six, he lives near Madison, Wisconsin, with his wife of more than 50 years.

Labels: [2023](#), [Darrell Petska](#)

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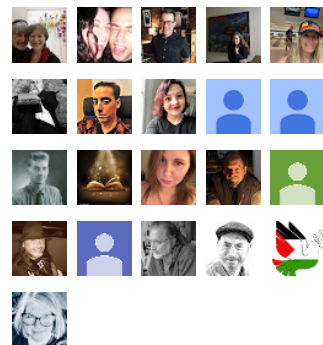
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