

A Walk to the Pier

by Joe Bird

My skin is still pale.
It's our first morning.
The sand not yet hot.
The wind not yet strong.

Now the beach is wide,
the surf is soft.
Waves crash gently.
Gulls sing to one another

The pier seems so far.
But it's morning.
I have time.
I have energy.

Did it begin last year?
Or three score and more?
It's your answer.
It's your beach.

Was it Ocean View?
Amusement parks,
Rasaborsky's
and straw hats.

The child stands alone
looking at the ocean.
Thinking? Pondering?
She is all of us.



I walk in white soft sand
but the water beckons.
At surf's edge
my heels dent the dark grains.

The remnants of a wave
lap across my foot.
Cold at first
then refreshing

The pier is still small.
My progress slow.
But I have time.
I have energy.

Galveston, oh, Galveston.
Wind, rain, rough surf.
Camping? Really?
But it was the beach.

Padre Island
before it was cool.
Amazing beach,
beautiful ocean.

For a while longer
the kids were still kids.
A birthday for someone.
A sister? A friend?



The pier is close.
I see its details.
The massive piles.
The heavy timbers.

My legs are wet.
As I slow my pace
people stare,
as if I'm an intruder.

The sun is hot
and I linger in the shade.
I even sit for a moment.
I wish I could stay.



We begin again
at a new beach.
An island with only homes
and a perfect stretch of sand.

Humble beginnings.
Buck's Anchor,
Bob watching TV.
Who ate the chips?

New families,
new kids,
big dinners.
A new tradition.

My legs are tired.
My feet are tiring
on the hard sand and
the sharp edges of shells.

It's hot.
I know I'm burning.
The sun is in my eyes.
How far, I wonder.

What was I thinking?
Never again.
Time is short.
I have no energy.



It was October.
It felt like December.
We sat in the sand
wearing winter coats

Then July.
Or maybe August.
Or even September.
It was always hot.

Crouquet on the beach.
Then cornhole.
Footballs, frisbies,
shells and sandcastles.

Kayaks and body surfing,
rafts and snorkels,
umbrellas and cabanas.
And the group picture.

I think I see it.
The umbrella.
The cabana on the deck.
I'm almost there.

It feels good.
I calculate the miles.
The others are out and
I tell them about my walk.

At the cabana
I have coffee
and look out at the ocean.
And think. And ponder.



Our family is smaller.
Our family has grown.
We are forever connected
by the generations

of the beaches.