

TAKE HEART

A Conversation in Poetry

*Edited & Introduced by Wesley McNair,
Maine Poet Laureate*

The distinguished author Robert Siegel of South Berwick, a writer of award-winning fiction and some of this state's best poetry, died last December. But his poems live on, including this one. Robert once said of "Airfield" that it dates back to the days of the cold war, "when the U.S. and Russia kept nuclear-armed planes in the air round the clock"--planes he saw from his window, landing and taking off at a nearby air base. "One day," he said, "it struck me that they were like Satan in Milton's Paradise Lost, 'the wounded god circling the globe, never resting.'" His poem reminds us that all these years later, as we carry on with our everyday lives, the reality of war continues.

Airfield

by Robert Siegel

All day the great planes gingerly descend
an invisible staircase, holding up
their skirts and dignity like great ladies
in technicolor histories, or reascend,
their noses needling upward like a compass
into a wild blue vacuum,
leaving everything in confusion behind:

In some such self-deceiving light as this
we'll view the air force base when moved away
from where its sleepless eye revolves all night.
We'll smile and recollect it conversationally--
tell with what ease the silver planes dropped down
or how they, weightless, rose above
our roof. We'll pass it with a sugar and cream,

forever sheltered from this moment's sick
surprise that we have lived with terror, with pride,
the wounded god circling the globe, never resting,
that in the morning and the evening we have heard
his cry, have seen him drag his silver wings
whining with anguish like a huge
fly seeking to lay its deadly eggs.

Take Heart: A Conversation in Poetry is produced in collaboration with the Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance. Poem copyright © 2006 by Robert Siegel. Reprinted from A Pentecost of Finches, Paraclete Press, 2006, by permission of Robert Siegel. Questions about submitting to Take Heart may be directed to David Turner, Special Assistant to the Maine Poet Laureate, at poetlaureate@mainewriters.org or 207-228-8263.