

TAKE HEART

A Conversation in Poetry

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

Walt Allan of Falmouth chose today's favorite poem from a past column, writing that what's important to him in a poem is "its ability to make a connection through surprise," as happened when he was reading "The Silent Seers," which, he says, "snuck up on me."

The Silent Seers

by J. Barrie Shepherd

Of all the witnesses
around that holy manger
perhaps it was the animals
who saw best what lay ahead,
for they had paced the aching roads,
slept in the wet and hungry fields,
known the sharp sting of sticks
and thorns and curses,
endured the constant bruise
of burdens not their own,
the tendency of men to use
and then discard rather than meet
and pay the debt of gratitude.
For them the future also held
the knacker's rope, the flayer's blade,
the tearing of their bodies
for the sparing of a race.
In the shadows of that stable
might it be his warmest welcome
lay within their quiet comprehending gaze?

Take Heart: A Conversation in Poetry is produced in collaboration with the Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance. Poem copyright © 2012 J. Barrie Shepherd. Reprinted from *Between Mirage and Miracle, Wipf and Stock Press, 2002*, by permission of Wipf and Stock Publishers www.wipfandstock.com. Please note that the column is no longer accepting submissions; comments about it may be directed to special consultant to the poet laureate, Gibson Fay-LeBlanc, at mainepoetlaureate@gmail.com or 207-228-8263. **Take Heart: More Poems from Maine**, a brand new anthology collecting the final two and a half years of this column, will be available in early January from *Down East Books*.