

Leaning on the Universe
Perry Epes
for Sylvia Shuey

Walking sometimes to school
in the early grades
when I was still getting used to
our moving to Pennsylvania,
I'd pass a white pony
fenced in a suburban yard
along Old Conestoga Road.
Long-suffering servant
of many a children's ride,
he never came to the fence –
I brought no apple to feed him.

Late one afternoon walking home
I went in the gate to tale to him
and pulled a handful of grass
that he snatched at, once,
before dropping his head again
to graze on the same stuff on his own.
He snorted and stood still,
let me lean on his withers.
All the weight of my morning,
all the homework ahead of me
melted onto his back.
I lightened, half off my feet.

Sixty-three years later,
I'm telling a friend at a dinner party
how my wife Gail, whom I've loved since eighth grade,
has studied to follow
the healing wisdom of horses,
who, with their big hearts knitted
to unseen nerves of the universe,
can read the energy of our feelings
and help use know ourselves in place –
they'll hover beside a genuine pain
but shy away from too much tilt
if give an take –

ah! Mid-sentence

I finally know I'd
started waiting, as boys will do,
to spring on my pony's back,
throw my whole body into the weight of me;
Startling me out of my
swoon into oneness,
he reached his neck around
and nipped my behind straightened me up to stand on my own
and finish my walk home.

Who might have seen
from passing cars
on Old Conestoga Road –
or the owner, perhaps,
from window –
the grass stained branded on my butt?