



MICROCHILD

An Anthology of Poetry



VALENTINE N. SENGBAU

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Cover inset: Valentine N. Sengebau, *Micronesia Reporter*, First Quarter, 1976.

Title page: Beach Road, Saipan, circa 1975, by Tadashi Ishikawa.

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The background of the cover is a photograph. It shows two young children, a girl and a boy, walking away from the camera on a grassy path. The girl is on the left, wearing a light-colored sleeveless top and patterned pants. The boy is on the right, wearing a dark tank top and light-colored shorts. They are walking towards a large, spreading tree with dense, reddish-orange leaves. The tree's branches are intricate and fill much of the upper half of the frame. In the background, other trees and a distant road with a few vehicles are visible under a bright sky.

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An Anthology of Poetry

VALENTINE N. SENGEBAU

NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS COUNCIL FOR THE HUMANITIES

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Microchild

Iv.

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Contents

Introduction	vii
Foreword	ix
Cultural Identity	1
Old Man and the World	3
Children of the Rising Sun	5
Searching	6
Man and Life	7
Torn Sail	9
Rungalk	10
Kerreel	12
Mirage	13
Time of Consciousness	14
The Task	15
The Watcher	17
Ngedeloch	19
Rubak	20
Ngak	22
Politics	23
Strategy	25
I Know	26
I Hear the Message	27
Boomerang	28
Western Front	29
Elubel	30
Rairecharmoracherchar	32
Microchild	34
Love	35
Love	37
Ousimang	38
To You, I Dedicate This	39
Knowing You	40

Friend	41
Song to You	43
The Differences	44
To Bernie & Ted	45
The Last Visit	46
I Remember	47
Until the End	48
Oneness	50
Fear	52
i call your name	53
Images	55
Flame Tress	57
The Plague	58
The Bridge	59
Luut	61
The Message	63
Epilog	65
Appendix	67

Introduction

Microchild presents a collection of poetry by the late Valentine “Val” N. Sengebau, the Palauan “poet in residence” who spent the final quarter-century of his life on his adopted home island of Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands.

During a prolific five-year period, from 1976 to 1980, Val composed dozens of poems that were published in the *Micronesian Reporter*, the official quarterly magazine of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands government, and in the *Marianas Variety*, then a weekly newspaper that served as an important source of community news in the Northern Mariana Islands. His poetry explored topics that were important to him: the loss of cultural identity in the face of rapid westernization, the political status negotiations then underway between the various Micronesian island groups and the United States government, and the joys and sorrows arising from his own life.

Editorial work was limited to organizing individual poems under one of four major themes and inserting footnotes that provide English translations for Palauan and Chamorro words and phrases. The poetry is preceded by an insightful foreword written by Val’s longtime friend and colleague, Bonifacio Basilius, giving the reader a biographical sketch of the poet from his birth on Peleliu Island in what is now the Republic of Palau to his arrival on Saipan in 1976. The poetry is followed by an epilog, compiled from interviews with Val’s friends and colleagues, intended to present a brief overview of his last two decades on Saipan. Included in an appendix is a chronological listing of Val’s poems with the original place of publication.

Several organizations and individuals provided assistance critical to bringing this publication to fruition. Mrs. Antonina Sengebau kindly granted the Council permission to publish her late husband’s work. Dr. Elizabeth D. Rechebei, the Council’s vice-chair, contacted Val’s relatives in Palau to explain the Council’s publication plans and to seek their approval. She also made preliminary arrangements with Bonifacio Basilius for the production of the foreword. Mrs. Sengebau, Elias Okamuro, Francisco S. Rosario, Samuel McPhetres, Abed Younis, Ron Barrineau, and Gloria Hunter shared their personal recollections of Val that were used to prepare the epilog. Several of these interviews were facilitated by Council board member Fermin Meriang. Dr. Karen Peacock of the University of Hawaii Library provided photocopies of Val’s poetry that originally appeared in the *Marianas Variety*. Martin Gerbens of Northern Marianas College granted Council staff access to archive copies of the *Micronesian Reporter*. Olympia Mori, Sandy Fernandez, and Melvin Takeshi of the Belau National Museum provided several old drawings by the German ethnographer Augustin Kramer for illustrating the book’s section breaks. The Belau National Museum and the Palau Pacific Resort graciously permitted the Humanities Council to use the beautiful watercolor by famed Palauan artist Charlie Gibbons that graces the cover of this book. Formatting decisions, such

as the book's layout and cover design, were made by Robert T. Torres, Dr. Elizabeth D. Rechebei, Fermin Meriang, and Scott Russell. Finally, Dr. Barbara Moir of the Northern Mariana Islands Museum of History and Culture took time from her curatorial duties to complete the copy editing of the text.

Microchild is the first volume in a planned series of publications by the Northern Mariana Islands Council for the Humanities that will make the works of local authors available to an international readership.

Foreword

*I took my leave from my beloved land
Suffocated with emotional turbulence
And not knowing where to land
But my sight was over the horizon
Seeking for intellectual solace
Among strangers in the foreign land
(From Val's poem Ngak (I), 1979)*

In late 1941 when the gathering clouds of war darkened the Western, Southern, and Central Pacific, a group of twenty-three Palauans set out on a 35-foot motor boat on a seven-mile journey from Peleliu to Angaur. That trip was to be their last. They were never seen or heard from again. The disappearance of these people was and still is a well-known event in Palau. A poignant song pondering the distress and the difficulties the “lost group” may have gone through in the open sea and on some foreign shores was composed in the late 1940s to memorialize the tragic event.

In the years that followed, many theories speculating on what may have happened to these people, some very farfetched, became favorite topics of discussion in many communities in Palau. There were even talks that Japanese military patrol planes spotted the missing boat many miles out in the open ocean, but unable to effect a rescue themselves and fearful that the drifters might fall into American hands with their knowledge of the defensive works on Peleliu, they bombed and sank the boat killing everyone on board. But this account, like many other scenarios that surfaced at the time, was pure speculation and the disappearance of the “group of twenty three” has remained a mystery to this day.

A man from Peleliu by the name of Sengebau was among those who were on board that ill-fated boat that day in 1941. His wife and their baby boy were not with him, however. When they boarded the boat at Peleliu, Sengebau was advised not to take his wife and the baby on the trip because “the sea was choppy and rough” and would be very difficult for the mother and child. Sengebau heeded that advice, took his wife and small child off the boat, and sent them home. That’s why they were not with him when tragedy struck. That baby boy, who was summarily taken off the boat and sent home, with his mother, was the future poet Valentine Namio Sengebau.

Valentine’s life began with a tragedy and an enigma, but these were not all. Like everyone else in Peleliu in the early ‘forties, bigger difficulties still lay ahead for him and his family. Valentine came from one of the biggest families in Peleliu at the time. He was the youngest of twelve children, seven boys and five girls. When their father and his traveling companions were lost at sea, some of Val’s older brothers took jobs at public projects away from home to help support the family.

The younger ones, including baby Val, remained with their mother Francisca Kedei in the village of Ngerdelolk, one of Peleliu's four major villages. And as frequently happens in a world that has turned topsy-turvy, the family's difficulties soon went from bad to worse. The Second World War exploded at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii in December 1941 and began unleashing its furies across the entire Pacific Ocean. Valentine's tiny world of Peleliu suddenly appeared on the maps of military planners on both sides of the conflict.

Valentine's family and the rest of the local population on Peleliu had to leave their homes when the war entered its Western Pacific phase in 1944. They moved to the village of Ngaraard in Northern Babeldaob, away from what was soon to become one of the major battlefields of World War II. There they lived in a refugee camp for Peleliuans and waited for the day when they could return home safely. Their stay on Babeldaob was to last for three years. In 1947, two years after the war, they, along with the rest of the Peleliu population, were allowed to return to their island to rebuild their lives.

But the Peleliu Valentine and his mother and brothers and sisters returned to was very different from the one they left earlier. Older residents could hardly recognize the place. The once lush, green island was devoid of vegetation and evidence of ferocious battles was everywhere. All four pre-war villages had been destroyed. The house where Val's family lived, like those of everyone else on Peleliu, had disappeared and even its location was difficult to ascertain. American marines and soldiers were everywhere, but they were combat troops with a different mission, and looking for pre-war house lots was not their priority. In one of his poems Val superimposed a very different world on these brutal post-war scenes which he remembered as a child on Peleliu and which he also saw ample evidence of on Saipan. His rippling verses in *Children of the Rising Sun* painted scenes of healthy Japanese tourists frolicking and basking in the sun on once bloody real estate after performing the rituals for the departed souls of their compatriots.

The exigencies of the post-war period did not allow the returning residents to resettle in their original villages. They were housed in Quonset huts in what is now the village of Klouklubed. The majority of the population has remained there to this day. Six and a half year old Valentine, who had begun to notice things around him, absorbed all the strange sights and sounds around him. Many years later, the mystery hanging over his father's disappearance and these post-war scenes of Peleliu, together with the dramatic events that he would encounter during the Trust Territory Period, would be the sources for his poems. But we are running ahead of the story, so let's return to young Val.

The members of the Sengebau family were devout Catholics. One of the older brothers, Augusto Sengebau, said in an interview for this report that their religious upbringing enabled them to bear the loss of their father and helped them survive the darkest days of the war. Shortly after their return to Peleliu, a significant event took place that was to make things a little easier for the

Sengebau family. As if answering their prayers, a Spanish Jesuit priest, Father Juan Bizkarra, and an American Jesuit from Brooklyn, New York, Father Edwin McManus, arrived on Peleliu to the great delight of the Sengebau family and the Catholics of Peleliu and nearby Angaur. Religious services were resumed and soon things began to return to normal.

When he reached school age, Val attended classes at the Peleliu elementary school, which was housed in a Quonset hut that once served as the Command Post for the Klouklubed area. Years later, he would tell his friends in jest that he learned his arithmetic by counting the empty artillery shell casings that decorated the Peleliu schoolyard. As a teenager in the early 'fifties, he enrolled at Mindszenty Intermediate School on Koror, where he met and established lasting friendships with many young people from other parts of Palau.

I met Val at Mindszenty School in 1954. He was a gregarious fellow with a very inquisitive mind. It was at Mindszenty School that Val got his first taste for poetry. Maryknoll Sisters from America, who first opened Mindszenty School for classes in 1949, introduced their students to the English language by speaking to them in English and requiring them to read the few English texts available. Val took to this task with enthusiasm. He went through the required reading materials, which included books that contained the works of many well-known British and American poets, in no time. Val liked to read Shakespeare's tragedies, especially *Macbeth*, whose bewitched atmosphere appealed to his active imagination. He tried to explain it to us without much success.

That fascination with the supernatural and the mysterious would be reinforced at Xavier High School in Chuuk, then called Truk District of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. We both signed up for Xavier in the summer of 1957 and in August of that year, we set out on a five-day voyage on the Trust Territory ship, the M/V Chicot, from Palau to Truk to begin our high school education. We were to make seven more such five-day ocean voyages between Palau and Truk by the time we graduated in 1961.

Xavier High School, in our day, still taught Latin as a major course in its curriculum. As a Catholic and having served mass frequently as an altar boy, Val was already familiar with the sounds of Latin words in the Catholic liturgy, but it was at Xavier that he began to fully appreciate the beauty and conciseness of this ancient language. His budding fondness for poetry was fanned aglow by the writings of Julius Caesar, Virgil, and Ovid, which he read all the time, even during recess. Today, so many years afterwards, I can still see and hear him, eyes almost popping out of their sockets, reciting Virgil's opening lines in the *Aeneid*, the legendary account of the founding of Rome and the Roman Empire: *Arma Virumque Cano...* (I sing about brave men and the weapons of war). He loved Julius Caesar's succinct war communiqué VENI, VIDI, VICI (I came, I saw, I conquered) and used to twist it for us whenever he returned from a trip to downtown Moen -- I went, I saw nothing, I returned. But it was Ovid's exquisite love poems in the *Metamorphoses* that were to have a profound influence on his own works. Many of Val's poems in this collection treat the same

subject, LOVE, but with an island flavor.

After finishing high school at Xavier, Val entered a Jesuit seminary on the U.S. East Coast for a brief period. Finding, however, that his true calling was not in the priesthood, Val left the seminary and enrolled at the University of California at Berkeley. He once said that he had a “double education” at Berkeley first, by taking the usual courses taught in the classroom and second, by watching news reports about the U.S. civil rights movement and the student protests against the Vietnam War that swept through college campuses across America in the ‘sixties. He graduated from Berkeley in the late 1960s returned to Palau in 1969, and became Editor of a weekly newspaper published by the Palau Community Action Agency called Didil-a-Chais. This was the first weekly newspaper, outside intermittent government and religious information handouts, to be published and distributed in Palau.

In the early ‘seventies, a report began to circulate among Trust Territory officials and visitors returning from Manila alleging that the people from Peleliu who were lost at sea some thirty years before had reached an island in the Tacloban group west of Leyte in the Philippines, and that some of them and their descendants may still be there. Father Felix Yaoch, a Palauan Jesuit priest, and then Congress of Micronesia Senator Roman Tmetuchl actually traveled there to investigate, but their search did not produce any positive evidence of the “drifters” having been there. In 1978, another report surfaced on Saipan asserting that the lost people had been located on one of the small islands north of Papua New Guinea. An official inquiry to PNG disclosed, again, that the report was false. The same report popped up again in 1999, a year before Val passed away, and this, too, was dismissed for what it was - a hoax. Valentine did not believe any of these reports from the very beginning, and was not disappointed when they turned out to be hoaxes.

As Chief of the Trust Territory Public Information Office in 1976, I convinced Val to join me at the TTPI Headquarters on Saipan. He arrived in the spring of that year and was to remain in the CNMI for the next twenty-four years. He passed away on October 26, 2000 and was buried on Saipan, his adopted land. Although he had penned a number of poetic verses earlier, it was during his assignment with the Trust Territory Quarterly Magazine *Micronesian Reporter* that he began turning out his poems on a regular basis. Later, in 1979, the *Marianas Variety* also began regularly publishing his works.

The latter half of the 1970s was a period of great changes in Micronesia. This was the period when the Northern Marianas formally set out on its separate course. Palau and the Marshall Islands were not far behind. It was, therefore, not accidental that many of the subjects Val dealt with in his poems were the burning issues of the day---the break-up of the Trust Territory into four parts, the opening up of the islands, especially the CNMI and Palau, to tourism and foreign investment, and the return of many educated island youths who began questioning and challenging the established orders. In *The Watcher*, Val treated the latter subject, the alienated youth, with consummate skill as

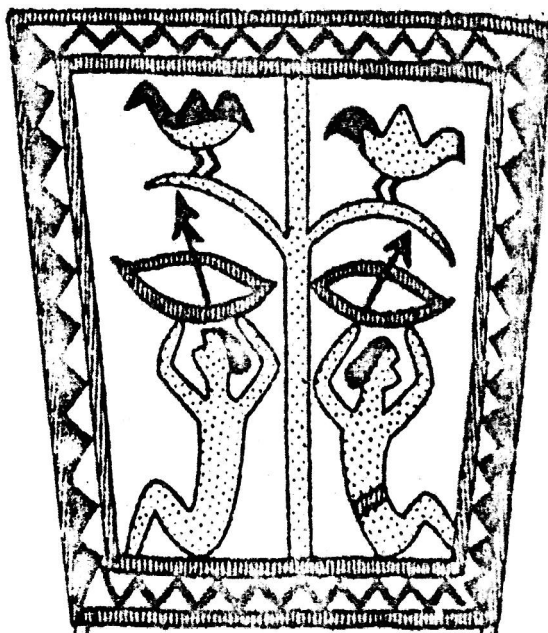
can be seen in these lines from that poem:

*Ngak (I) arrived
Thin, tall and grown up.
And to everyone's dismay
He sported long hair
Like the island's girls,
And wearing darkies
As if repelled
By the sight of his homeland.*

This was Valentine Namio Sengebau: a devoted son to a lonely widowed mother, a loyal brother, a cherished friend, a religious man, and Micronesia's foremost poet. As you enjoy his poems in this book, give thanks to the members of the Northern Mariana Islands Council for the Humanities who made this publication possible.

Bonifacio Basilius

Cultural Identity



Old Man and the World

He sat in tattered hat
Among grown betel nut and coconut trees
Oblivious to the change on the island.
His life consisted
Of few hens and roosters
One billy and a nanny goat
A couple of stray cats and dogs.
During the evening hours
When the sky was beautiful
He sat under a coconut tree
Chewing betelnut
Or sipping coconut wine
While listening to the whispering breeze
And crackling of insects
And occasional bird's cry
He paged through the *Variety*¹.
He knew every signs about the weather.
He could read them in the sky
From the wind and birds
And from the environment.
But since his eyes failed him
He began to sense things
More and more.
During the night
When all was silence
He listen to his thoughts
And now and then bursted out
With hilarious merriment
Over the things he had done
With his friends
And his wife
Even with the *Variety*.
Everyone had gone
Except the *Variety*.
And he was very proud
That in this life
While radical happenings
Altered a lot of things
Variety was still faithful to him.

He remember, then, that *Variety*
Was celebrating its anniversary
How old was it?
He did not remember
He went to the room
And found the first copy
Then he remembered
Yes, it came out on the very day
He and his wife got wedded
Some ninety years ago.
Thank God, *Variety* was still
Alive
To keep him company.

1. *Variety - The Marianas Variety*, a Saipan newspaper established in 1972 that served as an important medium of local news.

Children of the Rising Sun

Our islands in the sun
With everlasting summer
And clear indigo blue water
And the gleaming white beach
And lush vegetation
And of course the Southern Cross
Emit some magical charm
To the children of the rising sun.
Before they came in mourning
Seeking to lull the spirits
Of the fallen heroes and loved ones
To find lasting peace with their ancestors
In their version of heaven called Ten.
Shintoism demands such rite
And the children of the rising sun
Are firm believers of the traditional duty.
Now that the spirits have been appeased
And the season to celebrate
Ascends with value of Yen
Many Otome-sang¹ yen
To come and don two pieces
And tan in the sun
Oblivious to ogling glances
Of local dudes sipping bud
In the shade
Not wanting to be tanner
Than their birthday suit.

Searching

I left my beloved island
Suffocated with emotional turbulence
And not knowing where to land
But my sight was the horizon
Seeking an intellectual solace
Among strangers on foreign land
For I was mentally deprived in the mute silence
Among my blood brothers, I felt strange.
My life was full of contradiction
And I've become victim of my education
Without knowing the burden of its intoxication.
I have become a person with split personality
And my two identities have complexity
That cannot find amnesty.
My heart yearns for my birthrights
Where my umbilical cord is rooted deep in the soil
Lulled by its cultural heritage
For simple things were joy
And luxuries were necessary
And the sounds of nature were music.
But I have drunk deep the Pierian spring
And the thirst for knowledge is consuming
Demanding for further understanding
Of man, nature, universe and cosmos.
Knowledge is infinite
And I must continue my search
Although it's not within my reach
When I find it, will I be rich?

Man and Life

He paddled his canoe
In the moon light
While fishing for jacks.
There was no clouds in the sky
And the moon was even brighter
Life couldn't be better
Out in the open sea
Where you could see
For miles and miles
With the gentle breeze
Teasing the waves
As they caress
The canoe's sides.
The old's heart was filled with peace
As he gazed at the harmonious beauty
Of the world and galaxy
And only man filled life with ugliness.
Even in his search for happiness
And he called himself "Homo Sapiens."

He sat by the dying fire
Warming his wrinkled hands
As the storm roared with ire
As if the gods were devastating the lands
Telling man who's the master.
The mountainous waves pounding
The shore with deafening fury
As if to teach many who's mighty.
There was no single star
Visible in the heavens as if they're hiding.
He still sat alone and wondering
This plague of natural disaster
As the torrent of rain blustered the hut
And shook its foundation.
He had no notion
When this plague would end
Or whether he would be alive at the end.
One thing was clear
With all the technology

Nature could still instill fear
In man with no apology.
The new dawn found him by the dying fire
And the storm, and the rain had died
And the sea was like a mirror
And peace had replaced the night's horror.
Once again, nature had rendered its message
To man of his arrogance in voyage
Through life.

Torn Sail

From the distant reef
Comes the drumming sounding surf
And from the far away horizon
I detect a smoke-like cyclone
From departing vessels
Going to some remoted islas
In Micronations.
To some these are the only caress
Of the affluent cultures
From the district centers
Where people get seasick
On the field trips
And they call them primitive.
The smoke has replaced the sail
So some of our heritage.

Rungalk¹

You're infant child
Of Palau
Your parents,
Ngira ma Dira²,
Gave you
Birth
And called you
Buik Belau³.
They dream
Great many dreams
For you
To be
Hicom
Distad
Senator
Congressman
Legislator
Magistrate
Teacher
But never
A farmer nor fisherman.
Buik Belau drinks
Only cow juice
Coke
And occasional beer.
Mengur⁴ is free
Coke is 45 cents
And Buik Belau's
Worth more.
But
Adam e Edil⁵
For 9 months
Patience
Then pain
The first whimper
The mother's milk
The rearing
The midnite snack
The growth

The teaching
Why, then, oh why
The creation
Of coconut
As the Yapese said,
"Brown outside
And white inside."
Mom
Dad
You're not blind
You're only wearing
Sunglasses
Must Buik Belau?
And what would the Rebladk⁶
Say?

1. Rungalk - My child.
2. Ngira ma Dira - Mr. and Mrs.
3. Buik Belau - Palauan boy.
4. Mengur - Young drinking coconuts.
5. Adam e Edil - Father and Mother.
6. Rebladk - Spirit of dead ancestors.

Kerreel¹

Once I saw an ancient man
By the sea shore
Under the shade of a mangrove tree
Pounding coconut husk
For fibers
To be twine
By skilled hands and thighs
Into ropes.
Traditional Bai²
Houses
Canoe house
And canoes
Were made sturdy by these ropes.
Kerreel we call them
One day I searched for them,
But our elders
Shook their heads
And said, “Go to Yap.”
In Yap, they pointed
Toward Ulithi
I got the prize
Ngarametal wanted it
So did Ibobang³
And some Individuals.
It brings moisture
To the eyes
To be reminded
Of the cultural erosion.
Our dependency of outside
Brings Black Death
To our Pride and our souls
And our culture and tradition.
“Olekoi, ked mla iuochwe?”⁴

1. Kerreel-Coconut fiber rope.
2. Bai-Community meeting house.
3. Ibobang - The seat of Palau’s native religion (modekngei) on Babeldaob.
4. Olekoi, ked mla iuochwe - Alas, we have sunk.

Mirage

Mirror
Mirror on the wall
Who's the greatest
Of us all?
The mirage
The mirror says.
That's outrage
I reply
I've labored
Night and day
With all
My might
To reach
The summit
Of Mount Everest
With no rest
And U don't
Admit
Nor permit
The honor
Mine.
The mirror sighs
U've drunk
The hemlock.
Your tide ebbs
And sand glass
Empties.
You must go
Alone.
Adieu.
U've been seeing
The mirage
Across the seas
Of time.
Only fools
Never learn.

Time of Consciousness

Today marks a new page in history
Be it personal or historical
The stream of consciousness incarnates
Should ignite the torch of guidance
Through the morrowyears
Along the path towards
The horizon of infinity.
Eternity dwells within the soul
And man attains it
Through a complete harmony
To his innerself of consciousness.
The footprints of yesteryears
Are fountains of wisdom
To quench man's thirst
During his endless odyssey
In search for knowledge and understanding
And to climb the tree of life
To pluck and taste the fruit of perfection.
So man emerges from the womb of yesterdays
To reside in the cradle of todays
And dreams dreams of morrows.
Let's pause a moment and catch our breath
And to reach out and embrace our neighbor
And exchange the kiss of peace.
May the bright star guide your canoe
To reach the shore of paradise
Where the spirits of our ancestors
Yearn to receive us for all eternity.

The Task

The warmth of our ember glowing
During the chilly and dark night
Should offer warm embrace to ancients
Dwelling under tottered huts
Enduring a torrent of raindrops,
And the cold night winds
And occasional quakes.
Yet despite the lack of luxuries
Nothing hampers their souls.
For their spirits soar
Through the cosmos
In harmony with the moons and stars
And waltzing with the puffy cotton clouds
Proud and elegant in cultural and traditional attire
And free from bondage.
The sound of their folklore and chants
Should lull the man-made upheaval and distress
And infuse peace and harmony into micronations.
Like the gentle waves caressing
And hugging our shores
Across the 3 million miles.
Our seas whether ebbing or flowing
Bridge us into insular galaxy.
Our forefathers treasured the sea
Because it's our path, defense and meal
From ages to ages.
We must learn many things from the sea.
It belongs to no one
But for all to share but not possess.
The sea retains its identity.
Of course we are all searching for a pot of gold
At the end of the rainbow
And we all dream in hope
To reach this destiny.
However in spite of our shortcomings
Here and then there
We must continue sailing
Through the rain and storms
Guided by the stars at night
And by birds and currents at day

On our individual outrigger canoes
Holding our heads up high
With pride, honor, and dignity
Because each of us is an ambassador
Of his cultural heritage
Entrusted to us by our ancestors
To preserve, uphold and hand over
To the seeds of the bearers
Of the cultural torch.

The Watcher

I've watched that boy
With intense interest
And attentive affection
Since he was an urchin.
He caught my fancy
When he began exploring
Around the house
And the yard on four's
And then on two's
Like an investigating scientist.
The parents called him, Ngak¹.
Ngak mimicked everyone
Around and about
Without any fence.
He was everyone's pet.
He grew up happy and strong
Loved by everyone
And returned their love.
When Ngak left for school
Way beyond the horizon
Everyone cried
Including his dog, Bilis
His pig, Babii,
And his rooster, Malk.
Many new and full moons came and left
And the evening star
Changed places with the morning star
And dry and wet spells
Waltzed in and out
With occasional typhoon-puffs.
Then one typical day
Ngak arrived
Thin, tall and grown up.
And to everyone's dismay
He sported long hair
Like the island's girls,
And wearing darkies
As if repelled
By the sight of his homeland.

Ngak kept to himself
Reading into the nights
Talking to himself in his sleep
of girls in mini-skirts
of strange canoes called cars
of concrete roads called Hi-ways
of tall crowded houses
of different foods
Not taro, breadfruit, and fish.
When the next full moon tide
Flooded the shore
Ngak packed his strange luxurie
And left.
No one saw him off
Nor cried.
Some claimed he went to his education
But his people gave no attention.
Only I, coconut tree, know
Because I drifted across the sea
To this land
And was planted by Ngak's house.
I watch and see everything
And only speak through nature
I miss Ngak
That poor boy
But he may return one day
I hope.

1. Ngak - I, me.

Ngedeloch¹

You look very familiar
To me
Like an old acquaintance.
I wonder
Where did we first meet?
Was it in my dream
Or in your dream?
Or was it during your time
Or mine?
Or whether I met you
In the books I read.
Strange...
You sure look very familiar
To me
Yet you're so fathomless.
You seem to be everything
To me
And yet you're none
Of the things
I know.
But somehow I can see your face
Dancing all over
The recess of my mind.
Perhaps we did meet
In some distant age
In some remote time.
Then again,
Perhaps not.
But you still look very familiar
To me
And it feels good
In deed
To know
That I feel
I know you
And that's very comforting
You know.

1. Ngedeloch - Place where the spirits of the dead reside.

Rubak¹

He reclined against his half-finished canoe
Massaging his stiff right arm and aching back
From dressing the drift wood log
With axes and adzes all day.
It's been a herculean ordeal from the beginning;
Towing and dragging the log from the reef far away
During the full moon tide, it taxed him three-full-days.
Now the three full moons had come and gone
And the canoe was still half finished
A bad sign for him these days.
The people called him Rubak.
During his prime, Rubak could finish a canoe in two-moon time
And start working on the new one.
He had lost count of all the canoes he had made
Which famed him far and wide.
His people spoke of him with deep respect and admiration.
Rubak married the daughter of the island chief.
But that was a long, long time past gone
When he was young, agile, happy and strong.
He stood straight like a proud tall palm tree
With its leaves and fruits conversing with the stars.
Alas for the last several years, Rubak's life had ebbed
To its lowest point like the low tide in the lagoon.
His dearly beloved spouse had passed away
Like water seeping thru the sand
And his children had gone to schools far away
And married thru their heads and lived that way.
Rubak reached into his tet² searching for betelnut
And began preparing it with long experienced skill.
He also took out pictures of his children and grandchildren
And strained his eyes to examine them clearly.
He caressed each photo with paternal tenderness
While his heart swelled with pride and love.
He spat out his betelnut, and as he gazed beyond the reef
A lazy smile slowly stole across his wrinkled face
And his eyes became misty.
That's how his people found him the next day
Lying beside his unfinished canoe
His left hand clasping the treasured stained photos

And his right grasping his favorite adze
With a radiant smile painted across his face.
It was three days before the foreigner's holiday
A birth called Christmas Day.
All his children had just flown in
With their children to see Rubak.
It was a little bit too much, too late
To regret.

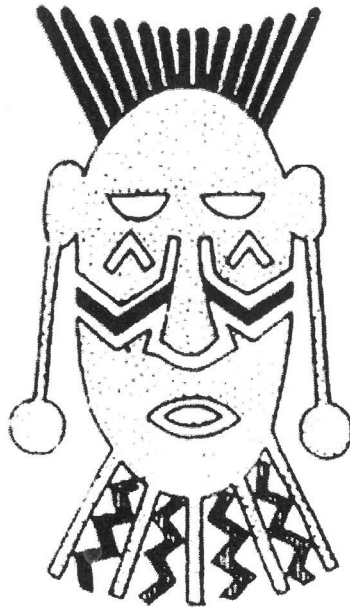
1. Rubak - Titled male in the family, clan, or village.
2. tet - bag.

Ngak¹

I took my leave from my beloved land
Suffocated with deep emotional turbulence
And not knowing where to land
But my sight was over the horizon
Seeking for intellectual solace
Among strangers in the foreign land.
I left my country
For I was mentally starved in the mute silence
Among my blood brothers, I felt strange.
My life was flooded with contradiction
For I've become victim of my education
Without knowing the burden of its intoxication.
I've become a man with split personality
And the two identities have complexity
That cannot find solace and amnesty.
My heart yearns for its birthrights
Where my umbilical cord is rooted deep in the soil
Lulled by its cultural heritage
For there simple things are joy
And luxuries are necessity
And the sounds of nature are music.
But alas, I've drunk deep from the Pierian spring
And now the thirst for knowledge is ever consuming
Demanding far wider and deeper understanding
Of man, nature, world, universe and cosmos.
Yet knowledge is fathomless
And my search is no less
To touch the shore of my reach
Where my heart and head can live in peace.

1. Ngak - I, me.

Politics



Strategy

Divide and conquer
Is
A strategy to win a battle
But we're never at war
Micronesia *divida est in tres partes*
So, they've been that way
United we stand
Divided we fall
Who cares
In the name of god?
Quid quid id est
Timeo americanos et dona farentes.
So blame yourselves
For goodness sake
We have given you education
We have given you edification
We have given you hand-out
What more do you want?
MICRONATIONS
are
Small, but beautiful
Rhetrics.
You've been considered spoils of war
But Micronesians were never at war
With anybody
They're never being conquered people
They were independent islanders
Having their own laws and cultures
They're before some nations were born.

I Know

I never cease to be amaze
By the damage
Inflicted by the mythical cornucopia
From some civilization.
If one believe in Utopia
And conditioning of others
To be followers of that devotion
I feel the breeze
Blowing thru the islands
Eradicating gerontocracy
And seeding democracy
For the future
Promised lands
Full of puppets
On the show-window.
That's psychology
My friend
Believe me.

I Hear the Message

The wind blows uneven
Thru the trusting souls open
To those who comically portray
The flame of friendship I might say
As an exquisite plastic flowers
Without any sincere aroma
Where no bees collect nectar
Or some poets or admirers
To utter a word of admiration
Or simple phrase of exclamation.
The wind blows and I feel the chill
And I have this ill
I've been had, the panorama
Is beautiful and with stream
Of predicament of painful scream
I walk alone
Why the walls?
I hear the angry wind screams
I turn to see the desolate streams
Where the water of life flows
No more. And the waterfalls
Are dry and dreary.
I must be dreaming, this is no show
Where we applaud at the end
Of the play, life is a play, deary
And bending the knee
Is the humility misplaced, I say
I hear the message in the mind
Or was it in the wind?
Nay, neither, you have to pay
The wind blows in May
And becomes a typhoon in June
And I cry to Neptune
May the Gods of Olympus help us.

Boomerang

It is a gloomy day
On the Western Front, they say
The sounds of the battle
From the friends and foe
Have become a murmuring sob.
The traitors have won the battle
But surely would lose the war.
The mighty has ignored the people's wish
And has aided their puppets
In the field where honor fades
And mockery of justice
Has become a monument of practice.
Have we become slaves of greed?
Where is our pride and creed?
People, rise with your guns of pen
And fight your war for your rights.
Even the Mighties has Achilles' heel
And the world is your allies
And above all, justice will prevail
At the end, courage, my people.

Western Front

The gentle breeze from the western front
Brings with it the latest policast
Of the casualties and survivals
In the silent battle of pens and ballots
To determine the victors for the nation.
The mini-marshall ruling class
Who through guile debases the population
Has incited the bloodless revolution
The victory is within sight
Where justice and honor shall prevail
And hope will light
The path to righteousness shall not fail.
Victory to the people
And victory for you and me.

Elubel¹

Convince me
A Micropalauan
Rather than tell me
Of your lip service.
Rhetorics I detest.
Your cause is the best
In your eyes
And mine is no less.
But how much
Do you understand
Of souls
Who wish to have
Cause they've not
If not for them
Then for the seeds
Of life.
The affluents
Enjoy the luxury
Of intellectual masturbation
With very short memories
Of yesteryears
Of the pangs
Agonies and terror
Of Sam & Hirohito.
Then again
Look into the eyes
Of the havenots
And see their empty bowls.
While your china ware
Is dripping with steak & salad;
The folks drink water
Yours is cocktail
And you take it for granted.
You preach of Dooms day
You scream "Oil Spill
And killing of nature."
Fine & OK
But show me
A workable & acceptable
Solution

To the folks' econ-povertiness.
 Folks don't eat rhetorics
 Of rosy lips & cheeks.
 You know
 You're worse than pollution
 Cause you're no solution.
 You mouth milk & honey
 But the essence
 Is genocide, tyranny & hunger
 In the message.
 Sure we also read
 "Soul On Ice"
 And
 "The Colonized & The Colonizers"
 And others.
 We all have souls
 But some are plastic
 And puppets
 On show windows.
 Let's fight for people.
 And scream for the folks.
 We should be their eyes
 Mouth and head.
 Let's cheat
 If we must
 For them.
 History says
 The Queen of France
 Said
 Let them eat cake
 She got the guillotine
 lak doliit a laok ra ngered.²
 Let's not be Charles the Wise
 Who made decisions
 After the events.
 The Palauan saying says
 Let's not be
 Brib ma Emaredong.³
 OK?
 Thank you
 For returning home.

1. Elubel - Bankrupt.
2. Lak doliit a laok ra ngered - Let's not miss this opportunity.
3. Brib ma Emaredong - Two bad neighbors.

Rairecharmoracherchar¹

I'm going to relate this epic legend
About the original tribes
Of courageous men, women & children
Who in the darkness of time
Dared to dream lofty dreams
Of adventures and discoveries
And so following the current
Of the mighty seas
And direction of the trade wind
Of the sky
And guided by the moon, sunsets & fixed stars
Set sail from their distant land
Braving gales and thunder storms
Amidst the towering & malevolent swells
And mercilessly tossed about in the foam
Suffering the scourge of heavenly torches
And the chilling & freezing night winds
Accompanied by the mounting pangs
Of hunger and thirst
Survived the herculean ordeal
Safely arrived on these thousand isles
In the golden sun where no man abided.
They were decreed to inherit these lands
Not by hostile act of force and violence
But by the guiding lights
Of good fortune, skill and endurance
And the blessing of their god and ancestors.
They became the first Man
To inhabit these lands of a thousand isles.
They tamed and tilled the soils.
Built dwelling houses, canoe huts & Bai's
Enacted laws for peace and harmony
And shared the bounties of the land & sea.
A new society was born
And the inhabitants called it
"BELUMAM," Our homeland.
And so thru the eons of time
While peace and comfort prospered,
Commuting and migration ceased.
However, an occasional expedition was made
And some drifters from afar rescued.

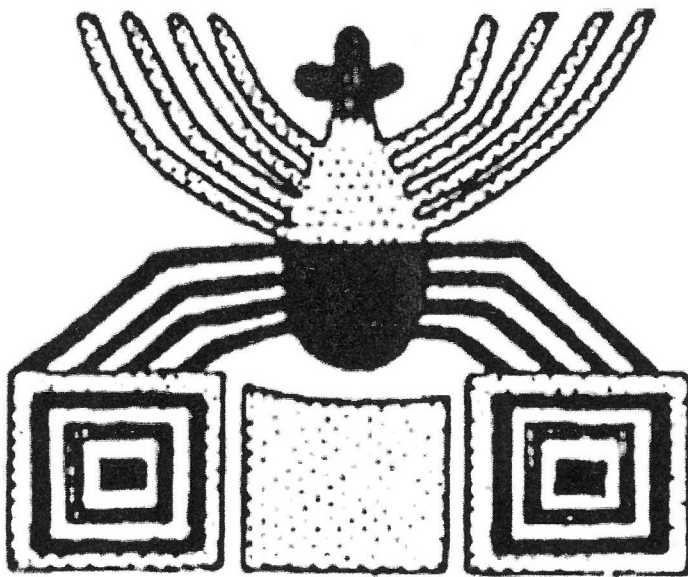
When the isolation became acute
 Variance among the brethren
 Dwelling in the sun emerged
 And thus evolved the differences
 In cultures, customs & languages
 With time blunting and eroding
 The oneness in the beginning of time.
 Then the epoch of intruders came.
 On their monstrous & gigantic canoes
 With many huge sails, they appeared
 Where the sun went to sleep
 And the end of the western sky.
 They plundered and raped
 The inhabitants, land and sea
 And further claimed the thousand isles
 In the name of their god and kings.
 There were inquisitors to save the heathens
 And Kaiser's boys lusting for minerals & copra
 And children of the rising sun to colonize
 And stars and stripes for the international peace.
 They all left deep & permanent scars
 And each scar was deeper than the last
 Until the entire populace
 Of the thousand isles in the sun
 Became the nation of sheep
 Without the shepherds of old.
 Then a pack of wolves descends
 Among the herd & devours a good meal.
 Slowly and silently the prey & predator
 Become one through digestion.
 There was no other sound
 Except the lapping & swishing
 Of the waves hugging the shore
 And the rising of the new moon tide
 Bringing broken zories, plastic bags
 And aluminum coke and beer cans
 To the immaculate beach.
 There are also a few tracks on the sand
 And scattered skeletal remains
 Bleached in the golden sun
 Awaiting resurrection or reincarnation
 Of new genesis to build a new nation.

1. Rairecharemoracherchar - As it has been and will be forever.

Microchild

In the emerging island nations
Where multi-national footprints
Have crisscrossed the souls
Of the indigenes and the children
In addition to their cultural heritages.
Drowning in a sea of exploitation;
The fruits of the future
Become transplanted in its native soils
As if through the artificial insemination.
The native cultures have been marred
With importations and assimilation
Of foreign enigmas.
Within this dissonant milieu
Microchildren are nurtured
With greater hope for tomorrow.
Alas! the abundance of the land and sea
Becomes second to imported luxury
And inferiority complex walk in
And effeminates the future heroes
And further mutilates the sacred ground
Of cultural and traditional destiny
Where our forefathers consecrated
And affixed and confirmed as a guiding star
To the Micronations.
But the tide of time has been altered
And the children of the island nations
With matured guidance of their elders
And the world around them
Will be able to reach maturity
And will be soundly proud of being islanders
And members of mankind
With even greater hope
Of achieving peace and harmony
For the sake of brotherhood
Of man and his environment.
Old folks only see visions
Of the world that would've been
Youth dream dreams of things to come.
Because a child is a father of a man.

Love



Love

She sits across from me
In her cut-off jeans & T-shirt
Which says, "Cupid's chick"
Wearing sandals and sipping coke
With those deep brown eyes
And that sensuous smile
That melts any frozen heart
That has been dormant.
I steal a look with envy
At such an Aphrodite
Radiating with loveliness.
She is the answer to every dream
That has been dreamed
From time immemorial,
And I feel the tip
Of Cupid's arrow
Piercing my heart
While it beats like thunder.
I'm smote with love's fever
And enjoy every bit
Of it.
Being "high" with love
Is the best trip
In life.
Try it and you'll like it.
Buy it and never count the cost
For one moment of happiness
Counts for life long lost.
Cease the hermitage
And pick your star
And sail with the trade wind
Like the snowy clouds
Up in the vast blue sky
Beyond the rainbow
Where loveliness weds happiness
And dreams come true
On Valentine's Day.

Ousimang¹

I'm tickled to death
Whenever I see you
Flirting around like a butterfly
During the mating season.
You coo and grin
And behave like an excited cock
Meeting a challenge
Of cock fight in the ring
Where winner takes all
And fatal death is for sure.
Hail then to you
For throwing your fate
In the field
Where priced prize
Is over your head
Where life and beauty fade
Like evening shadow
During an exquisite twilight.

1. Ousimang - Showing off.

To You, I Dedicate This

As I caress your image
Reposing in my heart
Yearning to escape
O'er disparagement
Remembering your clairvoyance
Etiquette becomes eunuch.
Gone is our promised land
And gone is our mutual condolence.
No one can recall
I once stood in the rain
Labored under pain
Over your fleeting shadow
Very humbly longing
Even against hope.
You know
Or I know
Under our covenant
Much is and will be shared
Until the end
Canonizes the
Heart of two people
In love
During the interlude
Of our life time
... our paths crossed
...we fell in love
...and our dream came true
... we can't ask for more.

Knowing You

Seeing is knowing
And I've often longed
To see my friends
By my side
On special occasions
When hearts get sentimental
And desire their presence
To fill in the void.
Let me not name names
For my friends
Know me and I them
And I pray and wish them well
And I know they wish me the same.
Yet we are all human
And at time a little selfish
And demand a little attention
Of warmth touched with love.
I wish to see my friends
From time to time
And be with them
Even just to groove
And enjoy an occasional drink.

Friend

Courage, my friend, courage.
And be strong
Like ancient Mount Tapochau¹
That watches over Saipan
Like a faithful Spartan
Who fights to the death
In time of crisis.
Be patient like Job
During this ordeal
For the tide of time
Will ebb
Before you drown
With the burden
Unfathomable.
Do not despair
For the unfaithful friends
Who have become your foes
They're like the wind
That changes directions
Bringing typhoons
And rain storms.
Be true to yourself
And have a clear conscience
Because at the end
It's your only true friend.
Weep you may
Tears cleanse the soul
Of its impurities
And then look around you
See the beautiful flame trees
In full bloom.
See the magnificent sky
At night.
See the vast blue sea
And then take a walk
Down the beach
During the sunset
When the tide is full
And full moon is peeping

Just beyond the horizon.
These are all your friends
And you have forgotten them
A long, long time.
Smile and say
Sorry friends
I've been asleep
All this time.
A prodigal person
Has arrived
At his true home
Among true friends
Aren't you proud
Friend?

1. Mt. Tapochau - The highest peak on Saipan.

Song to You

I sing you a song
As if you and I
Have met somewhere
It's a tuneless song
That reflects the sounds
And noises everywhere
And yet it sounds happy
Which is full of life and joy.
I sing you a song
And I shall call it, Nemesis
Because it's a song
That never misses
To appease
Or to tickle
A lonely person
Who has a reason
To be madly sad
Into hilarious laughter.
This world shouldn't be a house of slaughter
And I see no reason
Why I shouldn't sing.
Sing you a happy song
To kiss and soothe your pain
And your tears away.
Come now, my friend, hold my hand
And let's climb the Mount Tapochau
And sing a happy song
To the world to hear
Until our lungs burst
And our eyes filled with tears of happiness.

The Differences

Lingers are whispers of affection
We've uttered during the time of passion
 "I love you, my dear."
But could we say the same in time of sanity
 With no embarrassment and impunity?
 You're still young and I'm wiser,
 Beyond that hill is your domain
With many a charming damsels to gain
 And fulfill your dream to attain
 The family of perfection
 With little elves to caution
And a fair mother full of devotion.

Lingers are thoughts of aftermath
After a sudden storm, the path is ruined
And dreams and hopes become sour
And the glass menagerie is shattered
The footprints on the sand I stare
And can't tell the differences
 Between ours
What then is your Achilles' heel?

Linger not afflicted soul
In the desert where no men abide,
 Your rejection at her threshold
Must not castrate you in heart and thought
 But should make you a fuller person.
Don't let the tears become your beard
 Be desolated without being heard
 "Walk on through the storm
 Walk on through the rain
Though your dream be tossed and blown
 Walk on with hope in your eyes...
At the end of the storm is a golden sky
And a sweet silver song of a lark."
It's better to have loved and lost
 Then not to have loved at all.

To Bernie & Ted

When someone cares
... it's easier to speak
... it's easier to listen
... it's easier to play
... it's easier to work

When someone cares
... it's easier to laugh
... it's easier to be what you are
... it's easier to share
... it's easier to love.

For thus, Bernie & Ted
What you've been to us
If not to me personally
For being away and alone
I feel secured and loved
By both of you.

When someone cares
You feel you're on top of the world
And you feel alive with life
And the warmth caress of mutual friendship
Pure and deep
Lasting and fortifying
Omnipresence and omniscience
... we're going to miss you.
But growth must go on
As in life and in death
The orphanage you leave behind
Will uphold the honor and heritage
With white lie between the line.
Bon voyage, I love you both.
Thank you, Gerry, for reading this
For Val whose spirit dominates here
But physically away for some asinine business.
See you later, Bernie and Ted.
You bet.

The Last Visit

With the eyes of memory
 I've read
 Your name
On the pages of my mind.
 I've traced
Your coveted smiles
 Like the colors
 Of rainbows.
 I see
 Your faces
 Everywhere.
 I meet you
 In my sleep.
 I talk to you
 In my dreams
 Of thoughts
 Walk by.
 I see you
 Weaving.
 I slowly
Call your name
 As you ebb
 Like a lovely
 Sunset.
 I feel
A lone sea bird
 Cries.
 Amidst
Of the roaring sea
 I woke up
 Find my arms
 Crossed over
 My heart.

I Remember

Beyond the dark cold night
And within my restless heart
Sleeplessness is a constant companion.
I see no reason
Like your action
Inspired by your culture
And forgetting the laughs
We both intimately shared.
(Am I that easy to forget?)
Every moment that passes is torment
Like that man on the tree
On his mission to save.
Veer your eyes to me
Ever so lovingly for a second
And
Demand bliss of happiness.
Let's love & live in life
Even make Ngerchong¹ our haven
To you, my dear
Seeing you is a dream fulfilled.

1. Ngerchong - A rock island near Peleliu.

Until the End

Enriched with blinded hope
I ask you to be gentle
And be patient
With the fleeting time
Although we both know
The epilogue is inevitable.
We have delivered the prologue
Of our short drama
And what remains
Is the theme of the main act
To be presented on the stage
Where you and I are actors
And our own audience and critic.
We make our own dialogue
As we unfold our story
From day to day
With longing dreams
Of stolen glances
Of heartaches and tears
Of sweet senseless phrases
Of heartfelt promises
And shared happiness
Between two persons
Who have learned the truth about life
And accepted its predicament
Without pity and resentment.
Together, we will write
The story of our lives
Under the tropical sun
And canopy of Milky Way
Surrounded by emerald and deep blue seas
Dotted with a thousand isles
Of Micronations.
The setting is beautiful
And should reflect our story.
Should our allotted time arrive
And the final scene comes to an end
We should bravely face each other
And smile even with tears
In our eyes.

We will embrace and kiss
And promise to live in each other's thoughts
When we have time to sit down
And reflect our story
Written in the wind
Let us be kind
And wish each other well
Perhaps in the next cycle of life
Things will be different
When we meet again.
Let us hope in hope.

Oneness

Under the benevolence of cosmos
Within the embrace of the universe
And with the blessing of nature
Two persons are building a hut
Following the law of nature
Of the ancient
For those who have been
For those who are
And for those who will be.
GROOM: My love, place your hand in mine
And let me guide and protect you
With my love and my life.
Bride: Dearest, I always will be
Your strength in time of need
Your comfort in time of sorrow
Your hope in time of despair
Your smile in time of gloom
Your dream during our mutual life.
The COSMOS, UNIVERSE & NATURE
We bestow upon you, Bride and Groom
Our blessings as mirror
For those to come.
Do not ask what to give
But learn to share what you have.
The time is ripe for you
To learn to see & understand
To listen more than to speak
To give more than to ask
To be each other's side in time of distress
To see one another in each other's eyes
To see and need and tend it in silence language
To be there to give, to comfort & to love.
Remember, you are the sun and the star
Complementary but individual
Now and forever
MAN & WIFE, go and sail your canoe
From this sunset
Toward sunrise
And remember, each day is the first day
Of your mutual life.

Go and touch the stars
Kiss the universe
And embrace the cosmos
But always be true to the mother earth
Where the blessings of your ancestor
Will always protect you.

Fear

During the midnite hour
When silence reigns
I sit alone until four
With my thoughts so sore
Over my souvenir
... of unfulfilled promises
... and of broken hearts.
Then cautiously fear creeps in
Like a chilling night wind
That freezes the soul's wit.
The fear that fears fear
And fills the mind and heart
With unreasonable doubt
And reprisal jealousy and hate.
Fear that poisons the mind
And cripples the heart,
You turn sunshine into pitch black
Yet you fear death itself
Your epitaph shall be:
"Here lies fear
Vanquished by valor
And trust in hope."

i call your name

i.

Believe me
Beloved friend of mine
You're a gem
Radiating hope & love divine
And your teasing smile
Captivates my soul
Into reincarnation
And has built a castle
In my heart for you
To dwell everyday.

ii

Solitude blankets
The hidden thoughts
Of a longing man
Daring to defy fate
And go beyond his reach.
His whims and wishes are born
To occupy and peek into reality
Or otherwise impossible
For such a simple man to possess
Under glare of the day.
For he would blush and faint
And embarrass the gods.

iii

Tell me, oh, do tell me
Do you also dream
Like i dream
Of the dark blue sky
Of the vast deep sea
Of singing nightingale

Of blossoming red rose
In the early morning dew?
You dominate my world
And I've no peace
Unless I think of you.

iv

Lest i become a wandering fool
Under the dazzling and grandeur
Of the receding sunset
As the twilight
Paints your loveliness
Across the evening sky
i timidly whisper your name
While late birds look with wonder
i hum, "The Way We Were."
It's a wonderful thought
For a lonely man
On a deserted beach.

Images



Flame Trees

They flame in May
At no specific time of the month.
Usually the month is dry
And some trees are bare
The limbs and boughs are denuded
Dancing in the breeze
An unusual sight in the tropics
Where few trees shed for fertilization
And even perhaps for flirtation.
Still I must say the foliage is not native
I'm sure someone brought it for beautification
For no other sane justification.
But I must admit, in full arrayals
The whole Saipan is inflamed
In reds for about a month or so
And Hafa Dai¹ and Mas Mauleg²
Reigns over the land.
Since beauty is in the eyes of the beholder
Some discontent bucks are still eyeing
Perhaps for an exquisite chick in bikini
Without radiation from Bikini.
For whatever, one must be proud
To see the flame trees in profound
The trees bloom for May Day.
The Reds are proud for its color
R.C. is proud for Joe and Mary's Day
Law people celebrate it for Law Day
But Saipan dedicates it for money
Cherry Blossoms for Japan
Flame tree blossom for Saipan.

1. Hafa Dai - An informal Chamorro greeting roughly translating to "How are things?"
2. Mas Mauleg - The best.

The Plague

He sat by the dying fire
Warming his wrinkled hands
As the storm roared with ire
As if the gods were devastating the lands
Telling man who's the master.
The mountainous waves pounding
The shore with deafening fury
As if to teach man who's mighty.
There was no one single star
Visible in heaven as if they're in hiding.
He still sat alone and wondering
This plague of natural disaster
As the torrent of rain blustered the hut
And shook its foundation.
He had no notion
When this plague would end
Or whether he would be alive at the end.
One thing was clear
With all the technology
Nature could still instill fear
In man with no apology.
The new dawn found him by the dying fire
And the storm, and the rain had died
And the sea was like a mirror
And peace had replaced the night's horror.
Once again, nature had rendered its message
To man of his arrogance in voyage
Through life.

The Bridge

Oreor¹ and Babeldaob² are engaged
To be married
When they're bridged
By the single span bridge
By the gesture of Socio
Which costs 5 million for the wedding.
Ngetmeduch³ Hill has been ripped
The surrounding corals dug and piled.
The dump trucks whine
The bull doggers scream
The cranes groan and toss and splash
And the Socios' sweat
Under the tropical heat
And occasionally cheered
By the easterly breeze
And visiting showers.
It's claimed that 2 years
The bridge is.
One ponders if the influx
Of us will be on the Big Island
And Oreor will only be
Manhattan and Las Vegas of Palau.
In any case
The long waiting lines will cease
And commuting will be faster and easier.
No more big and little by order
Then happening of the inevitable begins
The ferry boat recedes into history.
One must thank the ferry for her services
Though patience and courageous she was.
Old age and technology retired her.
What will the Single Span bring?
More politicking and picnicking
Better socio-economic development
More and better health services
For the people?
Will the inhabitants of the Big I
Feel invaded
By the marriage made by the Single Span?

Will the people be taken advantage of?
There is that fear of the unknown
And of newness.
When new becomes old
The fear becomes appreciation
Sometime.
Man likes to make history
At the end
The history will judge the man.
For what is worth
There is your bridge, the single span.

1. Oreor - Koror Island, the commercial and administrative hub of Palau.
2. Babeldaob - The largest island in the Palau group, separated from Oreor by a deep channel. Until the construction of the bridge in 1976, known as the Koror-Babeldaob Bridge or the KB Bridge, transportation between Oreor and Babeldaob was accomplished by outboard motorboats and a small barge that carried passengers and cars across the channel.
3. Ngetmeduch - A small island near the Koror-Babeldaob Bridge

Luut¹

Over the years
Little is known
But
Its name sake
And
Its deeming deeds
Lower than Mengeai² tide.

Returning again home
And boast of the marked fleeting clouds

Kelulau³, they proclaim
Even Nemo⁴ fully agrees
that
Little is seen
Under honesty
And
Lots is wasted
And claimed actions
Until the Man approves.

Even the illiterates
Recognize the clownings
And the ghost would blush

Beyond the call of duty
Ever since that cursed time
Lots of non sequitur
And noises have been
Unethical and unenvied.

Not knowing the name
Of
Games' goal
More than they
Old traditionals
Call in their shares
Haven they guess
And little did they know

Of
Returning again home
Wearing
“Squid or *Luut* uniforms.”

1. Luut-squid (noun) or returning (verb).
2. Mengeai - quarter tide.
3. Kelulau - traditional decorum in enacting a law or decree in Palau.
4. Nemo - no one or nobody.

The Message

Dulcet Panorama,
You faithfully
Embrace
Everything
Around & about
Including the painted skiffs
Upon a painted sea
Without prejudice.
And the artistic sea
That weds & kisses
The distant sky,
You mirror the heavens
With Michelangelo's soul.
Patient dinghies
Calmly moored
After aforedone journey,
You nervously gaze
The sky brewing,
And you pray
That nature
Doesn't lose
Its terrible temper.
Brilliance of universe
Your reflection
On life
Paints the path
For man
Across the troubled seas,
And gives man
A glimpse of immortal hope
In his mortal world.

Epilog

The late 1970s and early 1980s, a period during which Val was writing most of the poetry that appears in this volume, represented a time of significant change in Micronesia. Headquarters of the Trust Territory government, housed on Saipan since the early 1960s, was downsizing in advance of the termination of the Trusteeship agreement. Headquarters employees from around Micronesia were returning to their home islands to assume positions within their respective district governments in anticipation of the advent of a new political status with the United States, then being negotiated by their leaders.

Val was one of a handful of Micronesians who elected to remain on Saipan during this period. He continued to work for the Trust Territory government until 1986 when all but a few transition functions were terminated or transferred elsewhere.

Val was comfortable on Saipan, an island whose cosmopolitan environment agreed with him. In Saipan, he was able to maintain an ethnically diverse circle of friends with whom he spent countless afternoons and evenings engaged in animated discussions on topics ranging from politics to sports. Saipan's large Palauan community undoubtedly added to his comfort. Whenever he wanted a taste of home he had only to visit friends and relatives or perhaps attend a meeting of the Peleliu Association. Saipan was Val's window to a larger world, one that he had come to relish during his heady university days at Berkeley, and one that he was probably very reluctant to relinquish in mid life.

In 1985 Val married Antonina Aquino and two years later started his career as an elementary school teacher in the Public School System, first at San Vicente and later at Oleai. His colleagues remember Val as an excellent teacher, normally quiet and reserved but always ready to share a laugh.

Val retired from the Public School System in 1995 at the relatively young age of 54. During his retirement, Val enjoyed watching television news shows and reading newspapers and books, particularly biographies. He maintained an extensive library of materials he had amassed during his time with the Trust Territory government and provided periodic advice to relatives and friends who required help with a variety of school assignments. For reasons known only to him, Val chose not to write poetry during his retirement years. Tragically, a house fire in the mid-1990s destroyed Val's library including scores of unpublished poems he had written years earlier. His only known surviving works appear in this volume.

As the millennium drew to a close, Val's health, never particularly good, took a turn for the worse. He passed away in 2000, leaving behind a wife and an infant daughter. In accordance with his expressed wishes, Val was buried on Saipan, the island that had been his adopted home for the last 25 years of his life. As is so often the case with gifted artists, the flame of Val's life burned

intensely in youth only to flicker out prematurely in middle age. Although Val is gone, his memory is kept alive by his many friends, relatives and associates. For those who never met Val, his poetry provides a revealing glimpse of the remarkable man known to many as Saipan's poet in residence.

A Chronological Listing of Published Poetry by Valentine N. Sengebau

Title	Originally Published
Rungalk	<i>Micronesian Reporter</i> , 1 st Quarter 1976
Kerreel	<i>Micronesian Reporter</i> , 1 st Quarter 1976
The Bridge	<i>Micronesian Reporter</i> , 1 st Quarter 1976
The Last Visit	<i>Micronesian Reporter</i> , 2 nd Quarter 1976
Mirage	<i>Micronesian Reporter</i> , 2 nd Quarter 1976
Luut	<i>Micronesian Reporter</i> , 2 nd Quarter 1976
Elubel	<i>Micronesian Reporter</i> , 3 rd Quarter 1976
The Message	<i>Micronesian Reporter</i> , 3 rd Quarter 1976
I Remember	<i>Micronesian Reporter</i> , 4 th Quarter 1976
Time of Consciousness	<i>Micronesian Reporter</i> , 4 th Quarter 1976
i call your name	<i>Micronesian Reporter</i> , 1 st Quarter 1977
The Task	<i>Micronesian Reporter</i> , 2 nd Quarter 1977
The Watcher	<i>Micronesian Reporter</i> , 3 rd Quarter 1977
Rairecharmoracherchar	<i>Micronesian Reporter</i> , 4 th Quarter 1977
Ngedeloch	<i>Micronesian Reporter</i> , 1 st Quarter 1978
Rubak	<i>Micronesian Reporter</i> , 4 th Quarter 1978
Until the End	<i>Micronesian Reporter</i> , 1 st Quarter 1979
Love	<i>Marianas Variety</i> , 2-12-79
Ousimang	<i>Marianas Variety</i> , 3-2-79
To You, I Dedicate This	<i>Marianas Variety</i> , 3-16-79
Knowing You	<i>Marianas Variety</i> , 3-30-79
Friend	<i>Marianas Variety</i> , 3-9-79
Old Man and the World	<i>Marianas Variety</i> , 3-23-79
Ngak	<i>Micronesians Reporter</i> , 2 nd Quarter 1979
Children of the Rising Sun	<i>Marianas Variety</i> , 4-6-79
Song to You	<i>Marianas Variety</i> , 4-27-79
Strategy	<i>Marianas Variety</i> , 5-14-79
The Differences	<i>Marianas Variety</i> , 5-25-79
Flame Trees	<i>Marianas Variety</i> , 5-30-79
I Know	<i>Marianas Variety</i> , 6-6-79
I Hear the Message	<i>Marianas Variety</i> , 7-5-79
To Bernie and Ted	<i>Marianas Variety</i> , 7-12-79
Searching	<i>Marianas Variety</i> , 7-19-79
Boomerang	<i>Marianas Variety</i> , 8-3-79
Man and Life	<i>Marianas Variety</i> , 8-17-79
Torn Sail	<i>Marianas Variety</i> , 8-31-79

Title	Originally Published
The Plague	<i>Marianas Variety</i> , 8-24-79
Western Front	<i>Marianas Variety</i> , 9-7-79
Microchild	<i>Micronesian Reporter</i> , 3 rd Quarter 1979
Oneness	<i>Micronesian Reporter</i> , 4 th Quarter 1979
Fear	<i>Micronesian Reporter</i> , 1 st Quarter 1980

My poems are perceptions and reflections of the cosmos, universe, the world, and of people, places, things in fragments and in sum; within fantasy and reality of dreams and nightmares, of hope and despair, of love and hate, of birth, life and death. The poems are written in free verse and style, in throw-away dialogue reflecting my native soul and heritage-sorry if you don't dig them. However, let's agree to call the poems "little bit of you and me, and everything and nothing."

VALENTINE N. SENGEBAU

