

## Where I'm From

By Lorie Zientara, Olive Hill, Carter County

I am from oceans sailed into inland rivers restored  
to worlds of fishes.

From boulders perched precariously above  
each deep-turning country road

Through rough-hewn hills re-awakened  
each spring by sarvice and redbud.

I am from the smell of fresh cut lumber,  
cucumber, fresh carrots pulled from deep-tilled ground,  
and soft mossy paths beneath bare feet.

I am from the unforgettable perfume of lilies of the valley  
that grew around concrete steps

Where we all caught fireflies in the deep  
darkness of warm summer nights.

I am from walking across the narrow beam  
the swing set made to hang chained seats  
and me from heels and toes.

I am from child immigrants traveling lonely  
and seasick.

I am from their dreams, and promises,  
disappointments, and hard-won successes.

I am from handmade cotton dresses, the new smell of black leather  
ballet slippers, fine wool coats my mother made, and Nanny's colorful  
lace-trimmed handkerchiefs.

I am from mill workers and wealthy friends,  
Stray cats and salamanders that wriggled through my small hands.

I am from strong differences: potatoes and coal;  
simple stuff, but good stock.

I am from unpretentious, unrestrained laughter with  
Good ol' Kentucky friends.

I am from these antediluvian hills, set down  
as rain distilled from the Kennebec and dispersed  
into the persistent Upper Tygart.

## Where I Am From

by Carol Mauriello, Olive Hill, Carter County

I am from dirt-- clean, wet soil I smear on my baby face and hands making mud pies in my first artistic endeavor I can recall.

I am from the smell of perennially growing things, not the least of which are rag weed and onion that wind up in the cow milk, goldenrod decorating a fence line, alfalfa bailed and banded, and the fresh cut grass from a human-powered mower.

I am from tobacco, sticky to the touch, stalks above my head, cut and piled high on wagons, my brothers balancing on top beams like tightrope dancers, passing on from one to the other and returning for more until the August heat has tanned their hides, their sweat showing through their white t-shirts.

I am from Farming, which is about waiting and hoping and dreading. Waiting for rain and hoping we don't have it. Not too much rain, a long steady one and not a drenching flood, storm or hail. It is about waiting for the hanging tobacco to be "in case" and then stripping it in a tiny, pungent room with a too warm coal stove. These tied hands of tobacco have an odor so real and solid, it supported me.

I am from an 8 room, two storied farm house with only two rooms heated by coal, a kitchen with a cook stove and pump sink. Christmas opens up still another room with a fireplace filling with sparkle and magic Like a present unwrapped.

I am from sleeping in unheated cold rooms in winter, beds piled high with quilts, warm, dreaming with my own body heat protecting me.

I am from pies and the taste of cherries and blackberries, apple, lemon, and coconut with flaking, perfect crust only mothers could make.

I am from the security of storms, hard rain on tin roofs of both house and barn, huddled with the breath and lowered voices of family, palm leaves tied to the bedposts and crucifixes over the beds, I am from Sundays, the fifth pew of St. Patrick Church, stained glass, sacraments, long colorful vestments, the rhythm of Latin like my second tongue, reverberates in my head as I hopscotch on a cistern top.

I am from catechism after mass and the stern visages of the mysterious Sisters of St. Francis, some sweet and caring, some hard and unyielding, much like the rest of humanity in spite of their cloistered world.

I am from this one old Collie-Shepherd who lived until her master died, who herded the dairy cows into their allotted slots for milking time. I am from patting their sweet Jersey, Holstein and Guernsey heads and the smell of molasses and corn mix on their warm breaths, while they chew to the rhythm of milking machines and the radio music-- Dinah Shore and Giselle McKenzie on the hit parade.

I am from the rough texture of the tongue of an orphaned calf's mouth sucking the salty sweat of my hand as she follows me into the "forbidden for animals" house.

I am from long, long summer days of the first decade of my life where change was too slow to come, and the details that remain are rich in memory.

Louella Davis, Olive Hill, Carter County

### **Where I'm From....**

A preacher man, traveling about from church to church  
I'm from a WWII hero  
from a long line of heroes  
I'm from tobacco fields,  
hot sun and sweat bees  
I'm from swinging from grapevines,  
bubbling brooks and flowers and fossils

I'm from making clay dishes  
and playing house with the neighbors  
I'm from paint pots made of iron ore  
rocks and ink of pokeberry  
I'm from painting on limestone rocks  
in the creek with colored rocks

I'm from selling apples with my brother  
from a pickup truck  
I'm from picking up pop bottles  
for 2 cents apiece  
I'm from swinging bridges  
and skinny-dipping

I'm from herbal medicine  
and herbs with my granny  
I'm from pick up pennies to earn them  
I'm from crepe paper flowers  
and graveyards

I'm from one-room schoolhouses  
I'm from walking two miles to school

I'm from horses, cattle and haylofts  
I'm from a sewing factory so loud,  
hot and sweaty with a cloud of lint

I'm from books and ghost stories  
I'm from love.

The poems below were written as part of Nehemiah Ministries ongoing outreach program for women in the Carter County Detention Center. Nehemiah Ministries' mission is to offer "hope to the hopeless while helping them rebuild the broken walls in their lives."

**Where I'm from**  
**by Lacey Gentry**

I'm from the University of Cincinnati, well really that's just what the birth certificate reads.  
I'm from a trailer park, runnin' wild, but thankfully that wasn't always me.  
I went from bein' touched and tossed;  
My mommy could no longer raise me.

I've gone from bein' a niece to a daughter and a cousin to a sister when my aunt got custody.  
I'm from getting my ass busted and stayin' grounded  
To learning my lesson and becoming well rounded.  
I come from being homeschooled and not learning,  
To high school class work, cheating and youth yearning.

I'm from skipping class and smoking cigarettes  
To going home and losing privileges.  
I'm from bein' raised rough, most would say  
And when 18 came, I ran away.  
I come from making a baby way too young  
To stupid decisions; that's why I'm no longer his mom.

I come from in and out of jail due to the fact drugs make you fail.  
I come from caught in a case to save my life,  
To finding out I have a lil' one inside.

**Where I'm from**  
**by Val Glore**

I came from bees and honeycomb to sap dripping from the tree.  
From my papaw who taught all these great things to me.  
I came from corn cribs and haylofts,  
the places I loved to play.  
From sleigh riding and hot cocoa on cold winter days.

I come from lightening bugs to spot light in the dark,  
bonfires, hayrides and gooseberries so tart.

I came from horses and saddles, all day rides so long, to camping out and not ever wanting to  
go home.

I came from hot summer days out on the boat,  
a cooler of beer, that luckily did float.  
To old hot-rod Chevys,  
Cruizin' town and getting wild, to Saturday races on that short one fourth mile.

I came from the country and  
Thank God for it all,  
a good Christian home because of my mamaw & papaw.

**Where I'm from**  
**by Linda Hayes**

I am from the creek,  
where everyone is family, but not by blood.  
I am from swimming in Tygart  
and gigging in the ponds.

I am from hanging out in the cemetery, drinking and smoking.  
I am from tobacco fields, pepper fields, bulldozers, backhoes, and trying to just be one of the  
guys.

I am from shooting out Mrs. Simmion's barn light and the whoopin' of my life.

I am from praise for a job well done,  
and parents that think I can do no wrong.

I am from I'm not really an addict and nothing's my fault.  
I am from coming forth and coming clean.  
I am from losing my kids and getting them back.  
I am from second chances,  
heck sometimes, third, fourth, and fifth chances until I get it right.

I am from not giving up or giving in.  
I am from good to bad and a lot of in-between.  
But first of all,  
I am from God  
because without him, I wouldn't be at all.

**Where I'm from**  
**by Ivy Slone**

I started from countryside and tobacco fields  
from childhood memories of hard farm work with papaw.

I am from once loveable parents that lead to screaming matches at night,  
My younger siblings  
running to big sissy for comfort.

Drunken father rages are my early reason for using drugs to cope.  
Always replacing one bad habit with another,  
hoping to better myself,  
only making me worse.

I am a loving mother of four.  
Been deprived of knowing them because of my bad choices.  
Will I ever fix this life I've made  
Will I overcome all the heartache?

**Where I'm from**  
**by Allison Garcia-Diaz**

I am from abuse.  
I am from sadness.  
I am from the basketball court to the football field.  
I am from the trees and birds.  
I am from the sand and the dirt, from the sun and the clouds, to the moon and the stars.  
I am from watermelon and biscuits and gravy,  
From the ribs of my brother  
From depression to happiness.  
I am from my father in Heaven.  
I am from God.  
This is where I am from.

**Where I'm from**  
**by Conswayla Scott**

I'm from dirt roads and loud black folk.  
I'm from down home cooking and midnight juggling.  
I'm from the dirt south,  
where this one, this one and  
this one's always there to help out.  
I'm from cool cups and plum trees, fishing holes and stinging bees.  
I'm from fire crackers and tug-o-wars.  
I'm from candy ladies and old folk always on the porch.  
I'm from telling lies, trying to look good,  
but never really truly understood...

Where I'm from??  
I'm from switches and belts, and keep on; you gonna get what's next.  
I'm from trap houses and dope spots,  
standing in kitchens, whipping pots.  
I'm from fish scales and straight drop...  
"Oh," where I'm from, or better you thought.  
I'm from my momma who I miss so much,  
A grandmother, oh, how I miss her touch.  
I'm from a father with problems,  
not too big to ever stop him from feeding his kids.  
Now you know where I'm from.

**Where I'm From**  
**by Tara Lyons**

Where I'm from – is creeks tucked between hills.  
From the smell of baking cookies and the rooms it fills.  
I am from women – stronger than even they know,  
who are willing to hold their head up and go on with the show.  
From a faded photo of a dad I've never met.  
From sisters that love me, but can't forgive me just yet.  
I am from, be better – be better- better- be better – be the best!  
From too much pressure to live up to the rest.  
From college degrees – then dropping the keys,  
that just could have unlocked so many doors.  
I am from choices that have made me who I am.  
From a house to homeless and steel bars that slam.  
Yet, I am from where rainbows come after the storms,  
where I'm held in God's hands and angels keep me warm.  
I am from lost and the struggle to be found.  
From breaking the chains to which I've been bound.  
Still, in all this, I am from love;  
undeserved – from my family, from my children, from my God above.  
I am from a story I still have to write,  
and an ending I choose with the possibility of being bright.

## **WHERE I'M FROM**

**by Cassie Cox**

Where I'm from is a lowly place that controls and makes me question;  
Where do I belong in the big ol' world?  
Just when I think I know who I am, my life takes a turn,  
And I start all over again.  
Will I ever trust, have faith and truly be loved?

I am from fear; when will this hurt and despair be released?  
Sometimes I force a smile;  
I've seen so much bad and evil in my time.

I am from a place where I long for the moment  
I escape from my inner dungeon.  
How long will I have sorrow in my heart?  
Lost in a world of turmoil.

I am from a place of mourning, day and night.  
Thoughts of my past, present and future take over my mind.  
Lord, let me seek salvation for my soul before it's too late.  
Then I will know where I'm from, so I know who I am  
And where I am going!

**WHERE I'M FROM**  
**by Sharon Stumbaugh**

Where I'm from, it's fried potatoes and brown beans.  
I'm from tank tops and cut off blue jeans.  
I'm from eggs in the fridge and chickens in the yard;  
Meat in the freezer and cows in the barn.  
I'm from barefooted wading in the creek.  
I'm from brothers and sisters playing hide and seek.  
I'm from long dirt roads and dancing in the rain.  
I'm from making bad choices and learning from the pain.  
I'm from magnificent sunrises and beautiful sunsets.  
I'm from take your chances but live with regrets.  
I'm from learning the hard way, never taking advise.  
I'm from lots of heartache and mistakes in life.  
I'm from having only memories of the ones I love.  
Where I'm from, we believe in heaven above.  
I'm from Thanking God in the morning and  
asking forgiveness at night.  
Where I'm from, when you want something bad enough,  
It's worth the fight.  
I'm from don't give up, but never give in.  
Where I'm from, you will be greatly rewarded in the end.

**WHERE I'M FROM**  
**by Ivy Slone**

Where I'm from, was hard work on the farm,  
with papaw on the tractor.  
From countryside and tobacco fields;  
From slaughtering pigs and canning vegetables  
from the garden for Winter stock.

I'm from high school cheerleading tryouts.  
From pep rallies and Friday night ball games.  
From after school practices and gymnastics  
on the weekends.

I'm from alcoholism.  
From parent's screaming matches at night  
and frightened siblings running to  
big sister for comfort.

I'm from disappointment in myself as a mother of four.  
From social workders and randome drug screens.  
From jail cells and adoption papers.

Will I ever fix this life I've made a mess of?  
Will I someday overcome the heartache?

## **WHERE I'M FROM**

**by Laura Erwin**

Where I'm from was planting gardens;  
Making teepees from tree and sticks;  
From playing in the rain while  
wading in the creeks, catching crawdads.  
I'm from 4-wheeler riding in the mud.  
I'm from keeping it in the woods.  
I'm from front porch sittin',  
eatin' taters and corn bread.  
God has blessed me with two wonderful kids  
I'm from horseback riding  
to thinking and deciding.  
Then I married me a cowboy;  
Now I'm from up the holler,  
raising chicks, rabbits, coon dogs, horses and cows.  
I'm happy now and I wouldn't trade my life for nothing.

## **Where I'm from**

**by Danielle Sparks**

I'm from loving parents and grandparents  
I'm from school dances and birthday celebrations.  
I'm from school dances and basketball games,  
lying to my parents who I'm with.  
I'm from smoking pot and drinking after school.

I'm from being an embarrassment to my family,  
always screaming and fighting.

I'm from a five man meth bust in Olive Hill,  
from front page of the newspaper headline  
"Mayor's Daughter."

I'm from J and H pod jail cells at CCDC,  
praying and crying "I'll never do it again!"

I'm from the famous Drug Court Graduates,  
a first time mother, loving every minute.

I'm from always back—sliding into old habits,  
wonder if honestly I will ever change.

I'm from learning the Bible truly for the first time,  
to believing God does have me and I can do this.

**Where I'm from**  
**by Amanda Henderson**

I am from long dirt roads,  
from skipping rocks across the pond and crawdad fishing.  
I'm from front porch sitting,  
I'm from a wood burning stove, the locust, walnut, wild cherry are the firewood that kept my  
family warm.

I'm from making buckeyes and playing school with my sister,  
from peanut butter chocolate and punishing her with my homemade paddle.  
I'm from rocky work boots and Harley-Davidson tees, from guitar-pickin' and singin' with my ol'  
man.

I am from those precious moments where I drift off to dream.

I'm from a lil' branch and it's called "Perry's"  
from cornbread and fried chicken,  
from Grandma and Momma.  
I'm from where enough is enough and too much is nasty!

**Where I'm from**  
**by Misty Binion**

I am from being proud to be a bootlegger's daughter and being ashamed for not being a good  
enough mother.

I'm from choices and time in prison,  
from double barrel shotguns and 357's and being a convicted felon.

I'm from a broken home and calling on God when I'm all alone,  
from being a junkie with a painful addiction, and fire and brimstone, then old time conviction.

I'm from praying at night for all my six children,  
and down on my knees and finally repenting.

**Where I'm from**  
**by Rachel Arlene Garay**

I am from beans and rice and from Spanish and English.  
I'm from the second to almost graduation, to being locked up and thinking about my mistakes.  
I'm from California to Cuba to Mexico.  
I'm from being the smartest to making stupid choices and throwing my hard work in the trash  
due to one mistake.

I am from learning from my mistakes and paying the consequences.  
I am from praying and asking God to save me.  
I'm from God being by my side and giving me a second chance.  
I am from not letting God down and getting my choices together and myself.

I'm from having no bond to praying to God and having a bond.  
I'm from thanking God and praying to God for saving me and letting me finish high school,  
getting back on track.  
I'm from a loving mother,  
I'm from letting her down.  
I'm from her accepting my mistakes.  
I'm from learning to respect my mother and appreciate her.  
I am from being loved by my family.  
I'm from praying to God everyday.  
I'm from having hope and faith;  
it will all be over soon.

## Where I'm from by Karen Fields

I am from Eastern Kentucky, a small country town that holds my heart and soul.  
I'm from the creek's banks to the mud holes, to the fishing holes where I spent so many hours.

I'm from my grandma's front porch swing.

I'm from working long hours on hot summer days,

in the garden growing food to can and store to feed my family all winter.

I am from the cows, chickens and pigs that gave us meats to get through the winter months.

I'm from the old wood cooking stove that cooked our hot meals and kept us warm.

I'm from the woods where we cut our wood for winter and ran to play hide and go seek with  
my brothers and friends.

I am from the fields that me and Grandma went to find blackberries for cobbles and  
dumplings.

I'm from the ponds we swam in to get through hot summer days, from lying under the shade  
tree on a hot lazy day.

I'm from being Grandma's girl,

lying in bed listening to all of her childhood stories to watching her forget who I was.

I'm from being a teenager to teenage mother and wife.

I'm from having it all to having nothing.

I am from the lost and founds in my life,  
my way or no way road.

I'm from being a wife, to being a widow overnight, to losing all my hopes and dreams.

I'm from a good loving mother that I lost too soon.

I'm from a good loving Christian grandmother who showed me her way of faith and forgiveness,  
as well as right from wrong, and all the love a child could ever want.

I am from my good and bad times,  
they made me who I am today,

sitting here in a jail cell doing time over a drug habit, I couldn't seem to control any longer.

It has made me feel I deserve to be here because of all the bad I have done in life.

Everyone has to pay for all their wrongs in life, and this is mine.

I'm from a good forgiving, loving God that I, honestly have found in jail.

Amen.

## Where I'm From

by Kathy Shelton

I'm from Eastern Kentucky, born and raised in the mountains.  
I'm from a proud housewife and hard-working, coal-mining, army man.  
I'm from tragedy striking my home and my daddy was gone.  
I'm from a remarried housewife and alcoholic coal miner, but things weren't pleasant this time.  
My happy home turned into a place I was scared to be.

I'm from an abusive household with drugs and alcohol all around.  
From being treated like a princess to being treated like I was worthless.  
From being a happy kid to sometimes just wanting to die.  
I'm from pain and hurtful words that were sometimes too hard to bear.

I'm from one abusive home to another.  
I married a man and when I thought things couldn't get worse, they did.  
I'm from drugs and alcohol again entering my world, but through my hands.  
Then I discovered I was going to be a mom.  
I changed my life to make a better life for her,  
and a couple years later, God blessed me with another angel.

I'm from realizing I really needed to change.  
I left the abusive home and found the love of my life,  
a country boy from the sticks,  
a loving father to children who weren't his.

I'm from my past coming back to haunt me.  
Once again I thought the drugs would kill the pain, but it killed so much more.  
I got hooked up with the wrong crowd.  
I'm from having my children taken from me and realizing I needed to get on the right track.  
I got off drugs.

I'm from being clean almost a year and joining church.  
I'm from pleading guilty for charges against me and owning my mistakes that cost me my  
freedom.

I know God wanted me to admit my guilt.  
And though I'm locked up, I'm from still looking forward,  
praying things work out.  
God has never let me down.  
I'm from going through trials, but God has a plan for me; He will see me through.

## **Where I'm From**

by Erica Stutler

I'm from OshKosh and Buster Brown.

I'm from Mary Janes and Christmas parades;

Weekends at Nan's; Mom and Dad;

Humble Pie

An eye for an eye,

Changes of season,

Happens for a reason;

Where looking back can't bring them back.

I'm from make mistakes

but will never break;

memories made and Hater - Ade.

The journeys end must

first begin. . . . .

I'm from Love and Laughter

And happily ever After.

## WHERE I'M FROM

by Alisha Bryant

Where I'm from the Great Lakes and the Pacific Ocean meet in the creeks of Kentucky.

I'm from hard work and elbow grease.

I'm from long trips and short stays.

I'm from rules, discipline and getting a 'butt whoopin' when I stepped out of line.

I'm from a big family that's dysfunctionally functional. We fight and pray and drink,  
all in a day's time but at the end of that day we unite 'cause we care.

I'm from having a baby as a kid and being mistook but I love my lil' man whole heartedly.

I'm from having the life of an All American Girl to losing all for drugs and a good time.

I'm from learning God through experiences and nearly dying.

I'm from being a daddy's girl to my mother's daughter.

Finally I understand.

I'm from 6 months rehab to a 3 year sentence and God, how I miss Ian.

I'm from many setbacks, waiting on God's time, to come back praying  
for the strength to hang tough so just maybe I won't have to do this again.

I'm from 2 Big Books: One for the alcoholic in me, the other for the Christian.

I've read them both yet I struggle to feel or follow the good Lord's word.

Where I'm from, abandonment is a type of tough love, NOT love left,  
and asking for forgiveness doesn't come natural to me.

I'm from dozens of 'one more' times and tomorrows, knowing that chance could easily  
be revoked or my life short lived but I've learned how to not care and take that chance.

Where I'm from it's never too late to change and despite who loves me, leaves me,  
or how bad it hurts, momma's got to try.

I'm from H-Pod, praying for some inner peace and acceptance to let go,  
for my family's sake, 'cause they deserve to heal while I learn to kneel.

Where I'm from we take it one day at a time, 'cause all were promised is today,

So, Easy does it.