

TAKE HEART

A Conversation in Poetry

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

Maine is such a diverse state, it can sometimes seem unfamiliar even to people who live here. Robert Chute of Poland Spring explores that theme in this week's poem about Down East.

Driving Down East

by Robert M. Chute

Crossing the Penobscot on Route One
we enter a different country. Our home state
on both sides of course, all part of the Main,
but the dull green rainbow bridge was a
suspension of disbelief as well as steel.

At Verona Island we expected a guard house
with a deadpan downeaster in oilskins to
silently check our visas and wave us through.

The houses were familiar clapboard and shingle
but smaller, pinched between wild lands,
barrens and ledges edging the sea. Life
on our inland lakes with its jumble of cobbles
seemed safe but not these wave-scoured ledges.

Life on the edge salts speech with words
as strange to us as to Summer People. Words
regional, individual, or invented to toll the tourists.

Everyone is "from away": we are, they are,
but all in one bag together in the final drag
dumped on the deck for culling.

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