

TAKE HEART

A Conversation in Poetry

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

Poet Stuart Kestenbaum of Deer Isle is director of the Haystack School of Crafts, one of the state's cultural treasures. His poem for this week remembers his father, a Mr. Fix-It who couldn't.

Mr. Fix-It

by Stuart Kestenbaum

My father never made anything or
fixed anything, even though we had
the obligatory tools in the basement,
the beautiful hand drill that belonged

to my great grandfather the carpenter,
the once-used brushes and the mysterious
cans of paint and shellac. And he never
cooked anything either, never turned

the coffee pot down to perk,
never cracked an egg and only once
that I remember barbecued steaks,
the smoke rising to heaven like a burnt offering

from the charred remains. When he returned
home at night, the smell of gas and oil
still close to his clothes, he'd settle on the couch
finishing a New York Times crossword puzzle while

keeping track of the Yankees on TV, until he
fell asleep, only to rouse when I'd change the channel.
"I was watching that," he'd mumble, though asleep,
and I'd believe him, but now I think he wasn't there

but had been at his domestic work, the night shift,
dreaming the lives of his children,
building a house of words, writing
the perfect story whose ending we never get to.

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