

# TAKE HEART

## A Conversation in Poetry

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

Through the tender conversation of today's poem Martin Steingesser, Portland's first poet laureate, reveals two mothers, one from the present, the other from the past.

### Mom Gets In One of My Poems

*By Martin Steingesser*

"I thought I missed you, darling," she is saying on the phone.

"No, you woke me. It's 7:30."

"Oh—" she says, and then,

after a pause, "I didn't want to miss you."

How she won't be denied, how  
I resist. Ninety-two, she's the kind  
of goodness brings trouble, the powerful  
voice calling me in

evenings when I was a boy.

Maybe now it's her way

to know she is okay.

Yesterday she called four times

for help with the date, days of the week  
refusing to stay in their places.

"It's Saturday," she says, a questioning in her voice, adding,

"I'm so confused, it's embarrassing."

I can see her calendar: she's crossed off Friday  
and forgotten, now maybe Saturday, too.

"I'm sorry, I cause so much trouble," she says, starting to cry.

"It's okay, Ma, I mix up days, too.

Last week," I tell her,

"I drove to the wrong job."

Suddenly she laughs,

and I know it's okay, for the moment

neither hearing the powerful voice.

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