

TAKE HEART

A Conversation in Poetry

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

This week's column features Edward J. Reilly of Westbrook. In his moving poem, he is haunted by the rescue of an older brother in childhood.

Hands Reaching

by Edward J. Reilly

A young boy, I was primed
for climbing, eyeing the oats bin
and its top, a crosshatching of boards
flaked with end-of-year fragments
left over from the top's
double duty as a hayloft.

I climbed and climbed, up the wooden
ladder, foot reaching gingerly for
the next step, hands gripping and
pulling, even a young boy's weight heavy.
I made it and exulted, exulted

all to soon. There came a time
when getting down was even more vital
than climbing up. But that distance
multiplied looking down, and neither hands
nor feet could move me down that crawl.

So I called, and my brother answered,
years older, years taller, strong
shoulders and long arms stretching,
reaching my straining hands, my hands
in his, the rest of me coming naturally.

Years later my bother, in his quiet, dark
living room reached and fell,
his large, much older body tumbling
to the floor, silent on a carpet brown as hay,
leaving me nights I dream about long
arms reaching for a frightened boy

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