



**Small Victories for the Soul VII**  
**Poems & Thoughts by Tom Sheehan**  
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*Review by Laurel Johnson for Midwest Book Review*

Reading a new book by Tom Sheehan is always a joy, but writing a review is not so simple. His previous books of poetry and prose have been heaped with high praise by reviewers, myself included. I recall saying Tom Sheehan is a “national treasure” and that opinion has not changed. In this review, I’ll let Sheehan’s words speak for themselves.

In “Saugus, Embassy of the Second Muse” he says: “...when the sound is the music of one word upon another, and it tears two parts of soul to four because nothing like it has been heard before, when the word dances on its own consonants, slides on soft vowels, when the spine knows the word is known by every ganglia, thong and sinew of the body....” that’s when simple words, strewn together, become magic. The author’s musings here encompass a wide range of thoughts, from his home in Saugus to his time as a soldier in Korea to his friends and family. In “Thomas, Thomas” he shares his joys and sorrows at being a father:

“Oh, years close such ugly jaws between father / and son, between the old and the dreaming, / between the looking back and the looking forward, / so I cheat sometimes and think the looking back / has more magic, the greater reserves of splendor.”

In “Ultimatum to a Friend” he memorializes that friend in words: “You will be a poem, a voice on a page, / a leaf rising from the ashes of a winter tree.”

And in “Old Saugus Town” his memories range from youth to old age with recollections sweet and sad: “...the back of a study hall seat hard across / my back I later felt only once in a truck / in Korea as I sat stiffly dreaming on a dirt / road thick with corpses of burned-away / visions;”

Tom Sheehan takes readers through seasons, changes, times, joys and losses as only he can, with words that penetrate the heart and linger on in the mind. If you appreciate poetry and prose created by a gifted wordsmith, this book is highly recommended.