

ODE TO GREATNESS

(Musings from the pen of L. Garnell Stamps as a tribute to Clarence William Seay)

Spring 1968

Somewhere in a quiet moment not so very long ago,
I sat down to write this poem, as my conscience told me so.

I sat down to tell the story;
I began to probe for facts.
I began the writer's journey
Up the road that turns not back.

I began to feel the tingle
Felt when greatness is the theme;
And the stanzas fell full-blossomed,
Like the ripples in a stream.

Let us now direct attention
Almost forty years ago,
To the hero of this epic --
And the greatest man I know.

Backward look across the vistas,
Forward look beyond today
At the man who single-handed,
Cast neglect and fears away.

Almost two-score years he led us;
And we never stopped to say
We were grateful for the service
That he gave us every day.

But he grew, and so did Dunbar,
While this town stood mute and still,
Not in step and not together
With the school up on the hill.

Yet, he never lost his patience,
And he told us all along:
"You may sometimes lose the music,
But you can't forget the song! "

So, tonight, we end that silence,
As we should have done before --.
And the vows we pledge this evening,
We shall keep forever more.

Will there ever be another?
Will one come like him again
Who will bear the awesome burdens
Which he bore, sometimes in vain?

Alma Mater, Alma Mater!
Icon of the golden strand,--
What's to come of you, great Dunbar,
When he leaves you in new hands?

Will his efforts still continue?
Will your doors stand open wide?
Or will his vision, clear and simple,
Like the wind, be tossed aside?

Who will be our chosen leader?
Where will Dunbar go from here?
Will she rise or fall, resounding,
Overworn with toil and tears?

We still love the great Tradition
That began in "Twenty-nine";
And we dare to keep on moving
Down the corridors of time.

Alma Mater, all we owe him
Is to make his dream come true --
All we owe him is the courage
To proceed to something new.

All we owe him is Devotion
To this school we love so well--
All we owe him, as he leaves us,
Is the promise to excel.

All we owe him, now departing,
Toward the sweet half-light of dawn
Is the strength of our convictions;
And the will to struggle on.

Sir: Tonight we praise your greatness
Thank you for the things we've learned;
Thirty-seven years of service
Locked in History's golden urn.

Thank you for your Inspiration,
Thank you for your guiding light;
Thank you for the countless thousands
Who cannot be here tonight.

Thank you for your matchless service,
Thank you for the strength to love;
Thank you for your Understanding,
And the soul to rise above.

Now the afterglow of evening
Slowly creeps across the yard.
Dunbar stands the way you leave her;
Measured in the world's regard.

Thus it is with men and heroes,--
Deeds pass on and memories stray;
And today what seems important
On tomorrow slips away.

And the shadows will diminish,
As they fall across the floor;
And the echoes fade forever
Like the name above the door!