one autumn day i sit in lian yao yuan, the courtyard for the preparation of the elixir of life, and tug at my white hair. poem given to my older cousin lin yuan zong, sixth of his clan

the falling leaves press home the fact that autumn is beginning the ice in the pitcher tells me the water there is cold yet the cassia twigs are now a brilliant green snow shaken off, the limbs reach toward the clouds

from my youth you have been a brilliant compelling light to me i grasped the wings and clung to the great phoenix for thirty years we shared a heart and a will in health and sickness we felt the same for each other

but now i sigh deeply under dark louring clouds my hands pluck and twist at my white hair an autumnal face stares out of my morning mirror a once thick shock of hair now wispy to my touch

poor as i am i look to you for support hungry as was once han shi i ask the laundress for food when the opportunity comes the divinely inspired man helps when the tao is present one does not bemoan one's fate

yo yi went first of all to zhao su qin started the league of the six states with a meeting with han to make something of myself or to retire is in my own hands but why should i get nothing for all my grief

murphy calling on his old friends for support

6/12/2011 9:24 AM

explanation of my feelings, given to chamberlain cai xiong

i have always admired the imperial high steward xie an who went with his courtesans to visit east mountain in zhe giang who became drunk watching the dances of chu under the light green clouds of sunset there where the songs of wu silenced the shrill voices of the monkeys he temporarily abandoned his subjects and went into seclusion and without ceremony he freed the black haired people i have also desired to emulate this lovely man and like him to soar into the red morning clouds with a high position

once i met with our illustrious ruler and dared to present admonitions about the rise and fall of empire the white gem stone is ultimately without blame even when the black fly besmirches it with injustice then one morning i decided to leave the capital and wandered for ten years in the in the park of liang wang while wild dogs barked at the nine gates leading into the imperial residence and bared the feelings of people who harbored resentments but sublime heaven acted against the unrest and the bright sun cleared away the confusing fog brave ministers such as kui and long stood at the steps of the throne and once again peach and plum blossomed in the middle kingdom

and now i dive into the sea to look for the moon pearl and wander over mountains to gather fragrant herbs i am chagrined at claiming the slightest worthy merit for once having undeservedly received the imperial grace my steps have left the towering clouds of the palace but heart still follows the heavenly horses drawing the imperial carriage

master, you are talented and determined to help the ruler as his minister and now there is no one to be compared to you a wind from on high fills your wings soon you will soar into the heavens i, however, will keep my oars plying the five lakes and let the splashing waves continue to pound my craft i dreamed of fishing in the rushing stream as did yan guang the memory of his splendid character persists through the mists of time

i vainly hoped that the star of the travelers obscuring the emperor would disappear the ruler's hold is now too tenuous for him to prevail on his own after one thousand miles walking my mind returned to the palace after ten thousand i sing this prolonged song the yellow crane will never return again this will change nothing though you may become saddened my boat glides across the surface of the rivers xiao and xiang the shadows of the mountains plunge into dong ting lake the fact that qu wan rushed to the mi lo makes me laugh at myself as once zhuang zi found the harmony of heaven on the banks of the hao here in my leisure among the fields i scratch my back and guard chickens and geese if after our long separation you wish to visit at your convenience you will find me in wu ling

murphy determined to give it all up forever

6/14/2011 8:11 AM

i remember my old walks in xiang yang, given to subdistrict judge ma zhu

once i wandered around the huge dam at xiang yang and then climbed to the high house of shan jian i opened the window to look at the green peaks and onto the shimmering mirror of the waters of the cang jiang

with my high cap on my head and wearing my valiant sword i bowed low before the prefect han chao zong it was there where i became separated from you, oh master and now i have time to reflect and think of my old walks

you with your ruddy complexion are not yet old while i come early to the autumn of life with my white hair my ambition, i fear, has been in vain earnings and fame are floating away from me like passing clouds

my heart thinks of return and clings to dreams of the distant past but the setting sun brings this old man scant hope in vain i think of yang hu and his everlasting glory as my tears fall on his monument stone in the xian mountains

murphy understanding finally the ordinariness of his life

6/15/2011 8:17 AM

in the snow, given to my cousin the district magistrate of yu cheng xian

last night in the park of prince liang i was cold and sad these days i hear nothing about you or your younger cousin when i looked at the snow covered trees in front of the hall their interlocking branches reminded me of brotherly love

murphy looking at old photographs of his extended family in texas

6/15/2011 8:27 AM

when i studied the dao in an ling xian i met gai huan who drew up for me a true daoist breviary, and i leave behind this poem as a gift to him

in pure water only can one discern the white stones only the immortals can recognize the young adepts master gai huan from an ling had achieved union with the dao ten years before

his words flowed forth in a waterfall of importance the source of his wisdom was inexhaustible his sagacity dazzled the highest officials they were in awe and terrified by the accuracy of his thought

he wielded his brush and gave his friends his songs all shan dong highly valued these poems and now even the visitors from ping yuan zhun venerate him and admire his pure essence

here i was an apprentice to the dao with the immortals of bei hai who gave me lessons in their palace rui zhu gong concentrating the force of my soul by umbilical regulated breathing in the bright sunshine of day i still yet think of the void behind the clouds

in this awareness gai huan has written for me a true daoist breviary given me a wonderful work that would even shame the immortals it was the transcendent wisdom of the huo lo qi yuan given me shining with the eight flawless beams of the stars and rainbows

the owner of this book is protected by the north star from all disaster and this dragon protects my own insignificant being i raise my hand and thank heaven and earth from now on birth and death are as nothing

as the yellow gold of the elixir of life fills the hall with that which cannot be collected in sacks i laugh at the people of this world their souls condemned to the demon caves of lo feng shan

even what was an emperor's grave in the past is now but a weed overgrown plot if you would wish to ken this offered song then accept the emptiness of the hua and song mountains

murphy flirting with the immaterial

6/15/2011 10:07 AM

given to the chamberlain cui zong zhi

the mongolian goose shakes her wings which fly over the seas as she cries, circling in the air, one knows it is now the white time of autumn the clouds blown by the winds come from the sandy deserts of the north and roil in constant confusion to the islands of huang he

here i am, to some extent a flying thistledown that wandered to here from ten thousand miles away i climb to the heights to look at the fleeting clouds and in them i see a blurred image of the old country

the sun sinks red below the rim of the earth the waters of the huang he flow to the far horizon i lean on my sword and sing for a long while my eyes focused afar and my heart filled with sorrow

at the end of this year i will return to my home would that i could also aim for wealth and position even confucius preached of the seventy riches when he was invited everywhere, but was nowhere retained

lu zhong lian ran away from his reward of 1000 pieces of gold how could his deeds be bought with jade scepters and silk scarves oh, when the timnes are most favorable it is best to live out among the trees and herbs

and i sincerely hope you will take my offered hand and walk with me into the quietude of the southern mountains

murphy taking his holiday before he starts to work

6/15/2011 10:32 AM

given to cui, a consultant to the imperial palace

the horse lu ji is certainly a steed sprung straight from heaven and by no means a mere colt, there, bending over the trough he raises his head and whinnies strongly into the wind as if ready to roam through all the nine regions of the country

and shortly after he were to arrive in the northwest surely he would be running soon in the southeast the ways of the world are continually changing problems in the future are difficult to determine in advance

i would hope that you would take great care of such a horse then you could always see him prancing along the main road

murphy never above a bit of self praise

6/15/2011 3:21 PM

given to wang zhong chen imperial commissioner of sheng zhou

nan ging is the residence of the emperor of the six dynasties it is the beautiful capital of the three provinces of wu a man must be worthy and trusted to be appointed there the son of heaven is noted for choosing such men as you

the immense sea now rests quietly in its furthest reaches and the great river flows ten thousand miles in its clarity as when plans were made to relieve the siege of zhao and han dan the emperor was determined to gain the services of old hou ying

murphy giving praise where it is due

6/16/2011 9:05 AM

given to my nephew gan wu as he departs

even if the fish's eye were larger than tai mountain it would not be as good as the famous yu fan gem you, my precious nephew, are like the moon glowing pearl your high reputation moves throughout the district of tian men

you can literally make the words of my house geomancer become true no less than when once wei shu challenged his existence i do not think myself able to achieve a practical life how could i reap earnings and fame as i am now

as it is i have high hopes for a set of five dice for i am now in distress tied to a rope like a monkey i have had to sell my magnificent horse in the stable yet there is still drunken noise from guests in the hall

the yellow of gold has left me long before now gone to make sure i kept the grace of old friends i hear that you are now to go to long xi and my soul is in shock from fear for you

i wandered along with you earlier but now the weather is bad and snow swirls around i am torn between staying here and following you and am unable to decide upon my course

my poor house shames me when i receive guests my speech is confused and i can make no sense of it for three days i have thought of how to tell you my sorrow but at dinner i cannot speak to you of myself

i am saddened indeed that you are now to leave and i am so unmanly facing one of life's separations but in my heart has lodged the sorrows of a thousand years an i have no one left to share my bitter lot

heaven and earth tear apart like a scudding cloud for now my life is tenuous as the finest of hair suddenly i realize the world has no beginning or end everything i see represents a great emptiness

go now to wherever, we will not speak of it since we separate it is useless to complain the more liver and bile, chu and yue, the difference is real yet mountains and rivers are the same as ceilings and curtains

if you find clouds and dragons happily together would it not be possible to find a benevolent ruler if you then acquired merit and wished to find me i will be floating on a river flecked with peach blossoms of spring

murphy too disgruntled to even put on his shoes

6/16/2011 10:43 AM

given to the adjutant pei

kingfisher feathers and threads of gold woven in the garments of the beautiful dancers were there no moon hanging between the clouds we would have nothing to compare their beauty with

this spectacle is of such exquisiteness that all other women must jealous feel but now the grace of the ruler has left this former lover and she must return with the autumn wind to her home

when one is distressed and in misery look not to neighbors that is just tears falling on a sulfur yellow loom when the weather is cold the hands are stiff when the night progresses the candle grows small

even in ten days the cloth is not woven completely and her hair is tangled as fresh silk threads but her beauty is still to be loved by all who see it is so very rarely evidenced in this world of ours

to you she shows her the flash of her smiling teeth when you gaze at her please do not despise

murphy aware of the ephemerality of it all

6/16/2011 12:23 PM

surprise from the past, given to district judge lu tiao from jiang yang

tai bo, eldest son of zhou tai wang renounced the throne his younger brother the same but more famously their pure nature influenced the whole of antiquity their changed lives fixed in the heavens as stars

they founded the kingdom of wu and lived at the eastern sea there generations of the lu family have shown outstanding efficiency many of these old virtues are united in your honorable being like a giant mountain you tower among your fellow men

even in your youth you were original when you went wandering at large from lo yang you wore the sword yan ling on your hips a gem belt held together with shiny beads and an ornate mantle

once i was a friend of those who fought cocks and was with these ruffians often in wu ling they cozened me and wished that i should join with them with loud and angry voices they began to insist

but you forced your way into the crowd surrounding me and all the assailants melted away leaving us alone you took care of my problem with the exalted censor's office and saved me from the danger at the northern gate

since then you have become district judge at jiang yang and there have cut back the brambles and planted fragrant orchids how impressive you were passing through the city gate returning from a hard five months of campaigning

birds of good omen came to rest on the beautiful trees of our district you attracted great talents to the well appointed hall of your yamen every time you returned home from the prefecture you played your string and wind instruments with joy

i was sorry to be so far away from you with no way for us to empty cups together to the north of the river the lotus blossoms to the south the strawberry trees have ripened fruit

i hoist the sail after the sun has risen from the sea and use the wind to drive me along the great river i have bought a quantity of xin feng wine to fill the boat like a second wang zi you going to yan xi on the way i met no one and i just came to your door you laughed out loud and we got drunk the most fun we have had in our lives

murphy always the trickster surprising his friends with his impromptu parties

6/17/2011 9:24 AM

given to my great nephew li ming, magistrate of yi xing

the son of heaven wishes to attract capable officials and the imperial house of li has many brilliant talents your luster is bright as the full autumn moon as it rises high above the wu terrace

your brush touching silk brings wonder to the world your sharp intellect sets in motion a clearing wind and thunder while the common man creeps like a caterpillar for a hundred miles you soar on the back of a roc up to the san tai star

when you rest from your labors after dinner you sit in your hall facing the mountains, playing your zheng the still transparency of the surrounding water brings peace as betimes white clouds glide over in their leisure

pao yo, the district magistrate of he yang, wrote many beautiful poems tao qian, the governor of peng ze, gave himself over to his famous drinking what hurts you is that you have not been promulgated for if you were you would be as prominent as the milky way

once the upstart liu zhan rioted against the will of the emperor people became confused, lost as if in the wilds of the forest in the passing stream no happy fish could be found and even the old pensioners fled from their estates

you swore to wash away the shame of gui ji and you wanted to avoid especially the area around xuan zheng you have always highly esteemed the chief censor because in your art your axe fell to the beat of the music

the minister was responsible for removing the bad and employing the good and it was due to him that you were taken back into service singing and playing the zheng pleased you as you took office this second time harmony and exultation made the hearts of the people drunk

when management is incompetent the incompetent must be removed for even if a nest is overturned the birds will return there again they awaited your arrival with celebratory jugs of wine dancing and singing the people rejoiced

the country folk threw their rain gear and straw hats into the air the silkworm girls loosened their hairpins and donned perfumes they crowded around wishing you joy with jokes and laughter they returned what they knew was your deep love for the people in the many official offices i have heard it said that among the famous nobles you are the best your influence is spreading throughout the land your fame hurries far beyond the region of the three streams

your lofty principles rise to the height of the clouds your insight is proven to be comprehensive using your skills in literature you convince men to be good friendly visitors arrive continually in their carriages

also i have come in my walk to be here with you and at the same time to the visit the mountain torrent of yan guang

murphy giving praise where it is due

6/17/2011 4:08 PM

description of the preparation of the great elixir of life, given to liu guan di

heaven and earth form the bellows matter is continually transformed therein the yin and the yang unite in great miracles form their interaction comes the pure soul

each brings its own remarkable abilities but who knows precisely their purpose and meaning in the network of the four seasons they are entangled forever with neither ever alone

the sun and moon change their times of rising and setting but the two sources of light are never joined the mercury is in the changing vessel yellow gold fills the collection cup

holding the connection shaft one can control them both after the substances melt in the flames of the oven freshen the red bird of fire to spread its wings again until the white tiger's essence is found in its dwelling

continue to cook until the proper time then allow the small elixir of life to solidify it looks like the dust on a transparent window the dormant ashes equal to the deepest silence

then through further cooking and stirring comes a red color and after 12 full distillations have been performed suddenly the great elixir of eternal life is formed for this is truly the essence of the dao

then one can play effectively with the brightness of the sun and the gods in heaven make their presence known the mountain bei fang loses its reputation for death your name already listed in the constellation of eternal life

and now i wonder what will happen to me my self has returned to the circle of magicians where i exercise my skills to form relationships and i throw off the vile ways of the world in contempt

i have striven to become an immortal and eschew evil and understand that humility is better than high spirits even you who do not walk to the golden palace gate must hope to be a guest of the god you huang zhun then you will be riding in the phoenix carriage faster than wind and lightning pulled by dragons which need no flick of your whip with one swing you will rise to the ninth heaven where you will join hands with the immortals in heartfelt contentment

murphy wishing mightily for an impossibility

6/18/2011 10:04 AM

given to the financial controller cui wen and his brother

the two pearls come from the ocean's deeps they are as beautiful as the jewels of bin he both embody the unique beauty of the full moon whose light from above falls beneficently on the people

your great reputation has the capital excited and your great worth is well known in neighboring kingdoms not only your retired life like that of xu wu at the foot of qi shan but your entire being brings to me a sense of devotion

in the past i did not put myself forward carrying a parasol like yu qing i moved west into the qin empire clinging to the dragon i ascended to the ninth heaven and undeservedly i was recorded as an official of the planet Jupiter

as a private man i was waiting at the red palace steps in the state council i crafted edicts for the emperor my talent was small but the grace i received was large but then eloquent detractors sullied my name

since i left the capital ten years have passed by now i have been back for more than ten days white rime of morning has gotten into the hair of my temples white dew appears on the clothes i carry with me

on the side of the road i see a pavilion beside green water i open the door and see colorful cushions spread out you distributed a thousand gold pieces to the knights assembled these are no ordinary guests who are gathered here

i want to chop down the cinnamon tree on the moon and use it for firewood for the comfort of these men others laugh at me and my attempts to step up to the heavens but the grace i receive is as large as the hills and mountains

i am unable to repay your kindness with the efforts of my body though in these verses only one person is explicitly here

murphy grasping at straws to re-establish mimself

6/19/2011 5:28 PM

given to district magistrate li yang xian

when li xu was not yet made minister of song zhi he hunted rabbits outside the east gate as song you served under xiang wang he found time to compose the gao tang fu

i was listening to the beautiful song of the clear waters right then we met here unexpectedly everything was made clear and the blue heavens opened thick clouds and fog were torn apart

the lush plumage of the purple phoenix is seen high up in its nest in the trees of kun lun a strong persistent wind comes from the northwest and the phoenix flies on to the southern sea

early on i wished in my heart to help the state and the people and was especially honored by the attention of the emperor yet on this precious white stone a black spot was placed suddenly the ruler and the ruled no longer knew each other

human life is influenced by the sense of duty both up and down the superior man offers his heart and blood in service when will the middle kingdom recover to happier days we both wish for the betterment of the empire

murphy polishing up his resume'

6/20/2011 8:11 AM

humorous poem given to zheng yan district superintendent of li yang xian

district superintendent tao was drunk every day he knew nothing of his five spring pastures his zheng had always been without strings he used a head scarf made of grass cloth to strain his wine

seeking cool winds he rested by the north window he called himself the man from the time of emperor fu xi and as soon as i set foot in the village of li yang he immediately called me his life-long friend

murphy a friend to drinkers everywhere

6/20/2011 8:18 AM

given to the buddhist priest yai gong

once in the east on long ling mountain i studied contemplation with bai mei kong the vast earth became clear as a mirror and i understood all motion is an effect of the wind i borrowed this creative force and it made my spirit sharp and piercing in the evening i sought the upper spirit of tai shan and from there i saw the sun sink into the clouds

at midnight i was asleep in the moonlight on the mountain thus i shook the dust from my clothes and escaped the crowds i was taught the buddhist doctrine but the events of the world left their mark on me the hidden mysteries i was taught had a heavenly sheen i separated myself from the world in its light i became a rudderless boat which has been untied as i watched the eternal changing of nature

i then i met an harmonious soul on the banks of the great river and this great teacher was a flower of a buddhist priest his manner of presentation set the mountains and seas into motion he influenced princes and ministers wherever he traveled when he takes up the fly whisk with the jade handle and begins he seems to rise to speak from a high vantage point the most sophisticated discourse pours out in a hundred streams through his tireless efforts one can begin to understand

it is as if a wind rises and the world begins to move and the ten thousand sounds of the earth sound for you alone it is as if all eight sections of heaven opened and closed and through your new found integrity you submit to thunder and lightning you keep telling yourself you are traveling through the tian tai shan and you have succeeded in climbing the steep rock to a broad green meadow cautiously you cross over a stone bridge and you feel as if you have arrived in the heavens

you are taken there and then you return to this realm you have seen for yourself the most beautiful scenery oh when, master, will you take me by the hand and we on wooden kegs cross to the islands of the immortals

murphy stricken dumb on the road to Damascus

6/20/2011 8:47 AM

during visits to the bei hu pavilion in li yang i look over to the wa wu mountains and think of antiquity, given to my friends

in the mornings i go up to the pavilion by the northern lake and look into the distance to the wa wu mountains the sky is clear and white dew has formed after a cold night then i notice that the autumn winds have returned

the hikers up here are dependent on the emperor's grace and look with eyes filled with his expectations and then one points out storks flying away but they are distant and we cannot see them clearly

we sigh together and seek to cheer each other up i ask myself when will i travel to giang su i have heard of a chaste, good girl who lives there who runs a retreat on the bay of the lai river

a pure brilliance continues to penetrate our eyes in the bright sun our faces shine in its radiance at the foot of the wa wu shan i see five or six burial mounds they resemble nothing more than tigers crouching to pounce

they are the cover of the nine sources of the underworld and the recall of their beings brings back the whole of antiquity wu yuan once asked a woman for food and she emptied her pot of rice porridge for him

then as his fate improved he gave vent to his long held grudges went to the land of chu and whipped the corpse of duke ping but by doing this he disturbed the connection between heaven and earth when one hears his name one shivers as from a bath of ice

if a worthy man such as wu yuan has not made a success of life how difficult nine out of ten steps are for all men, as if they climb tai hang i would rather share with each of you the shaking of dust from our clothes and soaring off and away for ten thousand miles

murphy as always measuring himself against great men from the past

6/21/2011 8:52 AM

given to my nephew gao zhen after a bout of drinking

we met on horseback and lowered our whips in greeting in unusual surroundings travelers are friendly i wanted to invite you for music and wine but i had just lost my belongings and had no money

nature in jiang dong changes relentlessly with the seasons now showing wind strewn flowers left over from spring the yellow gold hardly fresh in my hands brought joy yesterday i sold my property and this morning i was already poor

why are men so thoughtlessly complacent wouldn't it be better to flaunt our manliness you are a jin shi and have no further to go in the world i am in the autumn of life with white hair

when times are quiet no one thinks about the need for honorable men even small children ignore such as lian po and lin xizng ru who earlier stuck their swords in sharkskin leather sheaths they hang idle now in their belts, though ready for use

let's go get some wine and inebriate ourselves to the extreme we can spend another night as drunken as those of zhuan zhu wu

murphy looking forward to the keg promised for the evening's entertainment

6/21/2011 11:27 AM

given to under-district judge liu from qiu pu

qiu pu used to be an inhospitable area and in the yamen were only a few officials then you came to plant peach and plum trees and this land has become fragrant

with a brush in my hand i gaze at passing clouds i open the door and see green fields before me when the time comes we entertain ourselves under the rising moon indulge ourselves in wine and enjoy the silver radiance

and because of you my beloved friend and master i tarry long and cannot bring myself to return to my home

murphy flagrantly flattering his generous host

6/21/2011 11:36 AM

given to the district superintendent cui of qiu pu (1 of 3)

i love cui the district superintendent of qiu pu he has so completely the proclivities of district superintendent tao before his gate stand five pastures beside his well two chestnut trees

the birds of the mountains settle in his court hall the flowers on his porch shed petals in his wine he is in my heart and separation from him is hard for me full of longing i think of him constantly

murphy well spoken in his praise

6/21/2011 12:55 PM

given to the district superintendent cui of qiu pu (2 of 3)

district superintendent cui mimics district superintendent tao he sleeps like him in the daytime under the north window he often carries his zheng in the moon light of evening and understands the flavor of life without touching the strings

if you are his guest much wine is drunk yet as an official he thinks nothing of money on the eastern shore he grows much millet to make wine i urge him to reap the field early so we always have plenty

murphy the appreciative guest

6/21/2011 1:09 PM

given to the district superintendent cui of qiu pu (3 of 3)

the district superintendent of he yang was beautiful as a flower the man in qiu pu is a sparkling gem the quality of a district reflects its governance the manners of this district are better for your influence

the waterfall of qiu hua shan seems to fall from the milky way the mountains seem fresher than a painted screen try not to forget this earlier guest in the capital banished to zhang sha and mourned by the dignitaries of chu

murphy caught up in the sadness of his past

6/21/2011 1:18 PM

the view from qiu hua shan mountain, given to district superintendent wei zhong kan from qing yang xian

once i looked out of qiu jiang afar, the mountain with nine points resembled a lotus blossom the green water cascaded down as if from the milky way majestically towered the lotus bloom

i wish you would come there with me once any of you who can spare the time if you wish to experience being a noble's guest then you will sleep under those pines reaching to the sky

murphy the travel agent promising the trip of a life time

6/21/2011 1:27 PM