

Carl Russo was a Poet. He was my best friend. Carl was the kind of a poet that would sit on his back porch on a summer's evening with a cigar and a beer and compose his musings about life. I don't think he ever considered himself serious about it. It was just something he liked to do.

In 2004, Carl and I started the Florence Poets Society with the idea that regular people like us could write and share original poetry. We had known each other for years as our kids had gone to kindergarten together, but when we saw each other by chance at a poetry reading, and learned of our mutual love of writing poetry, an idea formed that changed both of our lives. That idea, the Florence Poets Society, is now in its 20th year and our annual review, Silkworm, has just published its 17th edition! The Twilite Poetry Pub, our radio program on WXOJ FM Valley Free Radio started in 2006, and also continues to this day. The Florence Poets Society is an Affiliated Organization of the Lilly Library, and continues to hold regular meetings at the library on the 2nd Thursday of the month, with Zoom meetings on the 4th Thursday for those unable to attend in-person. We have published hundreds of poets from around the world, held readings and events all over Western Massachusetts, and helped many, many people find their individual poetic voice. None of this would have ever happened without the vision and energy of my friend, Carl Russo.

Let me say a few words about Carl the person. He was indeed "larger than life" in so many ways. Imagine Santa Claus without a beard. Piercing blue eyes and a husky, resonant voice. Great, wonderful laugh and sense of humor. He loved poetry and music and food and all the good things in life. Carl had a big house and a big heart. He threw the best parties. On Christmas and St. Patrick's Day, the Russo home would be filled with dozens and dozens of friends and relations. On Halloween, Carl would hand out Full Size Hershey bars to hundreds of Trick-or-Treaters from the Florence Rag Shag Parade. He always saw the best in people, and he worked hard to help them, be it through his law practice, as a Social Worker for Veterans, or with the Florence Poets Society. He is greatly missed by his friends and family, and well remembered and respected by anyone and everyone who ever knew him. I hope you enjoy this collection of the Poetry of Carl Russo.