

MOMENTARY BLESSINGS

Poems by

Robert H. Deluty

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To my adored granddaughters
Ava, Claire, and Diana

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New York City cop
in church
What are you up to?
offered alfalfa
- 72 the general
the bookie
Yukon policeman
Yorkshire policeman
noting the tot's face
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touring Beijing
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Momentary Blessings

*The golden moments in the stream of life
rush past us, and we see nothing but sand;
the angels come to visit us, and we only
know them when they are gone.*

George Eliot

Warsaw athlete
describing *zlotys* as
Pole vault units

Nia Joyce Moore
adoring her pet name
N. Joy

the new inpatient
expressing distrust of
irregular verbs

dying woman
uttering her last words:
Never be bitter

dying man
uttering his last words:
Quit crying!

the kindergartner
regarding the *F* as
a broken *E*

the kindergartner
regarding the *J* as
a cooler *I*

at the zoo, a boy
calling rhinoceroses
fat unicorns

telling his father,
a rabbi, he's marrying
a tattoo artist

the census taker
referring to himself as
a bein' counter

Great-Grandma

trying hard to comprehend

bath salts addiction

ESL student

confusing *leopards*

and *lepers*

defining

sumo wrestling as *battle*

of the bulges

a boy asking

the amateur juggler

can he do marbles

a girl asking

the professional juggler

can he do toothpicks

squalid bar's bathroom . . .
the fellow in the next stall
belting out *Footloose*

a nurse calling
clinical intuition
her *sick sense*

the country fiddlers
describing themselves as
just playin' folks

Volkswagen owner
referring to gasoline
as *Beetle juice*

island hoppers
noting how much they love
changing keys

five-day-old baby
sucking the right cheek
of her twin sister

the psychiatrist
defining *narcissism*
as *I strain*

post board meeting . . .
the chair and treasurer
thumb-wrestling

the researcher
calling her dog's fur
a *Lab coat*

a child hoping
to learn how to say *No!*
in every language

an elder staring
at her nephew's scull tattoo,
asking *Why?*

an elder staring
at her niece's scull tattoo,
asking *Self-hatred?*

the musician
describing the no-hitter
as *pitch-perfect*

the quipster
noting her favorite bread
is *pun-pernickel*

his dieting wife
preparing Baked Alaska
with nonfat yogurt

the wine steward
enjoying his nickname

Port Authority

their teenaged son
explaining why confidence
beats competence

Chez Pierre patron
requesting the coq au vin
deep fried

Chez Pierre patron
ordering the crème brûlée
medium rare

heading home . . .
cruise ship guest considering
from which deck to jump

First Session

In response

To the psychologist

Stating that she can say

Absolutely **anything**

She wants to him and

Not fear getting in trouble,

The seven year-old asks

Why does blue cheese

Smell like sweaty feet?

geoscientist
defining *demo tape* as
a rock sample

questioning
his uncle which is more fun:
scotch or gin

questioning
his nephew which is more fun:
hash or weed

IHOP manager
telling the new omelet chef
Get cracking!

Bronx bar, ladies night . . .
spotting her ex-husband
in a miniskirt

playing Parcheesi . . .
the six year-old urging Gramps
Throw the dice bad

playing gin rummy . . .
the ten year-old telling Gramps
Don't lose on purpose

renowned scholar
putting on his cut finger
a Snoopy band-aid

the politician
defining *marriages* as
two-party systems

Wiccan writer
describing herself as
a good speller

Name a Commandment . . .

Sunday School seven year-old

replying *Be nice*

Name a Commandment . . .

Sunday School eight year-old

replying *Don't spit*

Name a Commandment . . .

Sunday School nine year-old

replying *Study!*

the grass cutter

regarding lawn mowing as

putting blades to blades

Halloween . . . young girl

dressed as a T. rex, clucking

like a chicken

first grade teacher
calling inquisitive boys
whys guys

her unemployed son
waking from a pleasant sleep
at the crack of noon

the geologist
defining *lava* as
rock that rolls

a third grader
assuming *heroines*
are bad for you

the four year-old
asking her grandfather
can goldfish fart

What's a tunic? . . .

history prof responding

Caesar dressing

convincing

his grandson that Plato

invented *Play-Doh*

convincing

his granddaughter that Sappho

was Groucho's sister

sixteenth birthday . . .

receiving from her Aunt Syl

a nose hair clipper

calling Dad's lessons

about the A/C business

heir conditioning

the bank robber
defining the word *abet*
as *back on the job*

the horse trainer
defining the phrase *bet on*
as *back at the track*

depressed customer
ordering for his breakfast
eggs, sunny-side down

Your goal in life? . . .
the Bar Mitzvah boy stating
To be a monk

swimming instructor
calling her infant's slobber
the baby pool

asked about his job,
the piano tuner notes
I fix flats

diner patron
pondering what's dirtier:
his glass or his fork

diner patron
pondering what's seedier:
her booth or her date

the poet calling
her distraught SOS
a plea at sea

his wife
assuming *pale ales*
are light beers

their grandson getting
Christ tattooed on his right arm,
Satan on his left

English instructor
defining the word *tip* as
thanks for waiting

Jordan Smith's wife
insisting on christening
their son, Geordinn

gourmet chef
calling his spice rack
a thyme keeper

verbose corn farmer
giving his wife and children
an earful

Ed and Ann Powers,
drug addiction counselors,
naming their child Will

*What's the greatest source
of natural gas? . . . fifth grader
answering My Dad*

Cousin Leroy
defining a *hero* as
a *lengthy lunch*

students assuming
their teacher made up the place
Lake Titicaca

his daughter
describing her boyfriend as
genetically loud

Aunt Bev displaying
her new bumper sticker:

Born Again Pagan

Describe your wife . . .

the old man responding

Punctual

Describe your husband . . .

the old woman responding

Using clean words?

Barry Hatchett

peevied his middle initial

is D

a dying boy

wanting to go to heaven

in a *Goodyear* blimp

their seven year-old
asking how many toothpicks
are in a redwood

Dad explaining why
men who wear flip-flops in malls
are detestable

Mom explaining why
men who wear sports caps backwards
are to be pitied

Elizabeth Cope,
an astrologer, naming
her baby Horace

Grandpa pondering
how polygamists handle
all those in-laws

Elle and Emma
introducing their parents
Jay and Kaye

a third grader
assuming an optimist
is an eye doctor

a fourth grader
assuming pomegranates
are perky lap dogs

a fifth grader
assuming that a fjord
is a foreign car

college prof noting
she is tired of talking
in others' sleep

I'm a feminist . . .

her grandfather responding

That's adorable!

Benjamin Dover,

an internist, asking friends

not to call him Ben

Philip Landers,

a pastor, requesting folks

not call him Phil

rural Arkansan

showing New York relatives

her homemade fur coat

movie fan Kim Park

hoping to name her firstborn

Jurassic

the teller
describing erosion as
bank trouble

a priest and rabbi
walk into a bar . . . solely
to hear new jokes

the OB's son,
a FedEx driver, noting
he, too, delivers

playing golf
Yom Kippur morning, Irv Katz
gets a hole-in-one

at Fenway Park,
their six year-old pointing out
Sox is misspelled

NRA exec
finding his Christmas stocking
filled with ammo

Richard O'Shea,
a billiards pro, preferring
the nickname Rick

Gramps boasting
he's never actually paid
for a haircut

sod sellers deeming
their battle for customers
a turf war

after marrying
Ed Carroll, Kris Maas choosing
to hyphenate

teen foot fetishist
daydreaming of becoming
a podiatrist

mid-game . . . his mother
screaming at him to ignore
what the coach says

the chimney sweep
describing his business as
Mostly overhead

telling classmates
her hospitalized father
misplaced his hip

mid-winter . . . asking
the Queens cabbie if turbans
have ear flaps

Maine's capital? . . .

a fifth grade smart aleck
replying *M*

Stanford scholar
shouting at his two year-old
Don't be immature!

drunken Nevadan
mistaking parking meters
for slot machines

their teacher calling
a group of town criers
a heard

their teacher calling
an assemblage of misers
a hoard

*The butterfly counts not months
but moments, and has time enough.*

Rabindranath Tagore

wishing Ms. Winfrey
would wed Deepak and become
Oprah Chopra

post-commercial . . .
a six-year-old girl asking
Daddy, what's ED?

their grandmother
considering eye contact
an aggressive act

Uncle Buford
noting his house has wheels,
but his car does not

to *What's your sign?*,
the young woman answering
Do not enter

hearing his wife
utter *We need*, knowing
she means *I want*

hearing her husband
utter *Maybe*, knowing
he means *No*

West Texas oilman
enjoying the sounds made
by his dentist's drill

asked what floats in baths,
their three year-old responding
Water

asked what floats in baths,
their five year-old responding
My dirt

her blind date
assuming *quiche* is pronounced
quickie

bride's Dad playing
Sunrise, Sunset off-key
on the bagpipes

Everyone hates me . . .
her shrink responding *That's wrong --*
some don't know you yet

the freshman
telling her coach *I don't sweat,*
I only shine

world-traveling girl,
queried *Where was your first home?*,
stating *Mom's tummy*

informing Juan Cruz
that being called a *mensch*
is a good thing

informing Shaun Cross
that being called a *gonif*
isn't a good thing

their five year-old
viewing the number eight as
zero with a belt

for his birthday
the dentist receiving
a little plaque

the coach describing
his team not as a *who's who*,
but as a *why them?*

gravely ill comic
requesting his pallbearers
wear clown costumes

an old Alaskan
defining the word *igloo*
as *digs in the snow*

watching her baby
cease screaming upon smelling
cinnamon

watching her baby
start screaming upon smelling
broccoli

longtime nurse
knowing how to say *bedpan*
in eight languages

after his Mom says
she wants diamonds, her child
buys a deck of cards

Baptist convert Cohn
opting to change his last name
to Christmas

grocery cashier
describing a cue card
as a line holdup

Granddad regarding
the Sunday *Times* crossword
as his Everest

calling the street
with potholes, trash, traffic jams
route of all evil

Yale professor
believing that *adverse*
means *disinclined*

Duke professor
believing that *bemused*
means *charmed*

Brown professor
believing that *flout*
means *show off*

Cornell professor
believing that *nonplussed*
means *unimpressed*

Harvard professor
believing *penultimate*
means *most ideal*

U.S. congressman
describing his duties
as *Housework*

asking Dad
why folks call it a *building*
after it's been built

asking Mom
if hungry owls can be termed
ravenous

asking Grandpa
why *wise men* and *wise guys*
act differently

asking Grandma
how come traffic is slowest
during *rush hour*

teen rebel
wiping her runny nose
on Nana's mink coat

a child reasoning
that if Poles come from Poland,
Holes come from Holland

Pakistani man,
touring Muncie, mishearing
Purdue as Urdu

Jane and Brian Coe
christening their first child
Roger Will

sports bar patron
requesting that the TV
be turned to *Ellen*

Greek scholar
portraying Aesop as
a fabulous guy

a Bronx elder
teaching his grandson
the rules of stickball

a Brooklyn elder
drawing for his granddaughter
a skully board

a little girl
inquiring why joggers
never smile

MLB umpire
stating a preference
to work at home

underage driver,
during a DUI stop,
opens a new *Bud*

a child wondering
whether birds are tickled
by their feathers

seven-foot man
looking up to his Grandma,
two feet shorter

the prof informing
her son that yearly records
are not called *anals*

his date admitting
she hates all types of poems
except limericks

Indian hostess
noting that most of *shindig*
is *Hindi*

Roman silversmith
stating the core of *plating*
is *Latin*

Scottish clothier
pointing out that *jersey*
is largely *Erse*

Opposite of woe? . . .
a young Texan responding
Giddy up!

his in-laws
refusing to forgive him
for succeeding

Burke/Murphy wedding . . .
the groom's best man, Josh Levy,
begs for one hora

Blume/Goldman wedding . . .
the bride's employer, Zhang Wei,
begs for some shellfish

Did you win, Pop? . . .
the golfer replying *Well,*
I hit the ball most

an Englishman
explaining to a Russian
why cricket matters

mistaking a foot
hanging out the car window
for a turn signal

chair umpire noting
the tennis matches start
at set times

claiming his shooting
of the tone-deaf trombonist
was justified

the saintly elder
stating he knows how to play
the kazoo, but won't

a heathen choosing
the epitaph *All dressed up
and no place to go*

Dutch couple screaming
at their Queens daughter-in-law
for serving *cheese food*

spouses inviting
their two psychoanalysts
to Christmas dinner

Name a French author . . .

high school freshman writing

Jewels Verne

Name a French painter . . .

high school sophomore writing

Toooloose Lautrec

Who composed “La Mer”? . . .

high school junior responding

Clod Debussy

Who penned “Pensées”? . . .

high school senior responding

Blaze Pascal

the doctor claiming
there are no lawyer jokes:
They're all true stories

deaf lip reader
from Maine noting her struggles
with Southern draws

world-traveling nun
grinning as she calls herself
a roamin' Catholic

his wife regarding
reverse psychology as
making her shrink cry

writing the teacher
that their fourth grader needs
a private tooter

her brother-in-law
demonstrating a real knack
for making foes

their child asking why
the sign *Slow -- Children At Play*
shows a kid running

Hawaiian dentist
christening his new practice
Paradise Flossed

insurance salesman
accusing the accountant
of being boring

defense attorney
accusing the car dealer
of being sleazy

overhearing
the egotist me-deep
in conversation

the old dentist
viewing his young colleague as
all crown, no filling

for no good reason
lifelong Vermonters naming
their child Dixie Mae

Why'd you marry Ma? . . .
their father responding
Her lasagna

Why'd you leave Bayonne? . . .
their grandfather responding
Someone got shot

Tyler Beaumont Lee,
a fitness expert, loving
his nickname, Ty Bo

two minutes before
meeting his heart surgeon,
putting out the cig

unkempt Uncle Mort
wanting his tombstone to read
Fashion Icon

oft-married Aunt Jean
wanting her tombstone to read
Glad To Be Alone

the critic noting
the movie's medieval serfs
all have perfect teeth

pondering why

Mom describes Pop as *one tree*
short of a hammock

pondering why

Pop describes Mom as *knitting*
with just one needle

distinguishing

for his Methodist in-laws
putz, nebbish, nudnik

little league shortstop

wishing that his position
had a cooler name

refusing to quit,

the trucker stating *I'm in it*
for the long haul

old bocce player
hoping to appear someday
on a *Wheaties* box

psychotic man
claiming the voices he hears
are really boring

shocking her grandchild
by knowing Charlize's last name
is pronounced *THAIR-en*

delighting Great-Gramps
by knowing Harpo's sib's name
was pronounced *CHICK-ob*

nine-year-old pitcher,
fearing line drives, requests
a catcher's mask

after the *I do's* . . .
telling her new son-in-law
Don't be a douchebag

a Jewish elder
claiming she's the press agent
for her grandkids

Tee-Ball coach
asking players to hit, throw
with their eyes open

whining Maureen Moore
learning that neighbors call her
Mo' Moanin' Mo

griping Morris Lowe
learning that colleagues call him
Woe-is-Moe

honeymoon, first night . . .
obsessing about the forms
on his office desk

beneath his robe,
the grad wears a shirt stating
Me So Horny

ninety-year-old man
mishearing *power mower*
as *paramour*

slugging his brother
for wearing out in public
a *World's Best Dad* tee

asked if *Oy!* reflects
shock, joy, pain, awe, or relief,
Katz replying *Yes*

*We can only be said to be alive
in those moments when our hearts
are conscious of our treasures.*

Thornton Wilder

eight months pregnant,
asked *Is it a boy or girl?*,
replying *Of course!*

Francis X. Dunphy
wanting to study Yiddish
just for the insults

wishing Gramps would be
gratefully humble . . . and not
hatefully grumble

pet cemetery . . .
laying a wreath of flowers
for Fido Feldman

thanking Aunt Nancy
for putting the *she* and *Nan*
in *shenanigan*

wedding night . . .
thinking more about her gifts
than about her spouse

amusement park . . .
six-year-old triplets screaming
as one: *Scary rides!*

on the golf course . . .
the old trucker describing
his longest drive

fourth grader asking
if mountains in Australia
are *down under*

on the evening news,
watching her psychologist
doing a perp walk

Father's Day . . . finding
Beth Loves Daddy! scratched deeply
in his car's hood

family picnic . . .
Aunt Grace calling her firstborn
a son-of-a-bitch

begging Great-Grandpa
not to wear his leather suit
to her wedding

shocking his students . . .
stating he plays solitaire
with actual cards

shocking her students . . .
stating she frequently buys
hardback books in stores

Honest to a Fault

Questioned after class
By the highly suspicious teacher
Whether his mother helped him
With yesterday's homework,
The third grader responds
Without qualm or hesitation
No, Ms. Kim, she did it all

jazz musician
praising the policeman
for keeping the beat

using a bowl
of alphabet soup to create
a haiku

interviewing
for an office job, sporting
scuba diving gear

CFO matching
her clothes to the color
of her Chihuahua

CEO noting
the sole photo on his desk
is of his Schnauzer

Uncle Clyde opting
to fill out his tax form with
Roman numerals

telling her patient
who stuck berries in his ears
I've got cream for that

law firm partners
discussing whether or not
they should plead guilty

calmly explaining
to her six grandchildren why
tattoos are sinful

the old man claiming
his little black book contains
mostly physicians

obese Cousin Sid
complaining his knees buckle
but his belt won't

their mother firing
the doctor who insisted
she step on his scale

a child noticing
Grandpa's ears are hairier
than his scalp

frail professor,
on his deathbed, giving
the nurse a lecture

frail comedian,
on his deathbed, giving
the nurse a noogie

sixteenth birthday . . .
getting a text from Mom:
Dad's been arrested

New Year's Eve . . .
getting a text from Mom:
Nana shot Poppi

Aunt Viv asserting
her back goes out more often
than she does

Disney-loving ref
noting he often whistles
while he works

two elderly men
nearly coming to blows
over pension plans

IT guy calling
going to the bathroom
downloading

IT guy claiming
he's never actually met
any of his friends

told that heat rises,
a boy questioning why
hell is not cold

her Baptist boss
assuming *Hava Nagila*
is a Cuban song

on Father's Day,
feeling chilled to the bone
by his stepson's stare

eight-year-old player
suggesting tennis court nets
be replaced with bricks

ten-year-old player
suggesting basketball floors
be trampolines

their neighbor noting
traveling first-class means
without children

Aunt Pearl getting
cable installed solely for
the weather channel

told to be quiet
in church, a child responding
Cuz folks are sleeping?

narcissistic Slav
stating *ego* is central
to *Herzegovina*

asking what Dad meant
when he said Mom is as sharp
as a marble

asking what Mom meant
when she said Dad is ten cents
short of a dime

asking what Gramps meant
when he said Gran's unlucky
at thinking

asking what Gran meant
when she said Gramps is all wax
and no wick

an asocial teen
refusing to utter *love*
when scoring tennis

Dutch linguist loving
that, of all cheeses, Edam
is *made* backwards

the detective
referring to sneezes as
cold evidence

six-year-old Tim Barnes
telling folks his name is spelled
B, like in Burp, A . . .

six-year-old Kate Gunn
telling folks her name is spelled
G, like in Gun, U . . .

Pop's wake . . . wondering
how he'll manage in heaven
if he can't swear

an altar boy
asserting he's involved
in *Mass production*

Gramps booing the team
because it's from a country
ending in *stan*

their four-year-old son
catching the *Nerf* football in
his helmet's face mask

saintly woman
taking her spouse's surname,
Hooker

turning one hundred,
Great-Granddad starting to wear
a barbell earring

first grader calling
the boy who said six plus five
equals ten, *Liar!*

Cousin Bud musing
whether, in a prior life,
he was debonair

Alfred Aidan Betz,
a writer, signing his name
Alf A. Betz

the home builder
describing the oven as
within their range

Great-Aunt Lu sitting
on a rocker, trying hard
to get it going

New York City cop
referring to his badge
as a *heat shield*

in church, a techie
praying that the geek shall
inherit the earth

What are you up to? . . .
Gramps answering *It should be*
“Up to what are you?”

offered alfalfa
on his burger, Pop replying
No grass, just meat

the general,
hearing *big brass container*,
thinks *The Pentagon*

the bookie
explaining how his wages
come from wagers

Yukon policeman
preferring *Mountie* to
Queen's cowboy

Yorkshire policeman
preferring *special constable*
to *hobby bobby*

noting the tot's face
is partly Mom, partly Dad,
mostly Chris Farley

old talent scout
asking the young singer
if she's on helium

touring Beijing . . .
a Brit loving the people,
loathing the spitting

Grandma calling
their breakfast cereal box
the *Life* preserver

asked what's new,
the retired dean responding
Just chillaxin'

the sheep farmer
describing wool as *what's got*
ewe covered

John Pfister,
the office loudmouth, hating
his names' *h* and *P*

the arm wrestler
noting the rules of his sport
are easy to grasp

the hockey coach
describing his goalie
as *a net asset*

the prizefighter
telling the surgeons he, too,
wears gloves at work

donning fatigues
so that passersby will say
Thanks for your service

reading on the jar
of cashews the warning

Contains nuts

reading on the box
of the hotel shower cap

Fits one head

reading on the can
of carpet cleaning spray

Safe for carpets, too

in France . . . Iowans
expressing outrage over
pay toilets

in France . . . Texans
expressing outrage over
serving sizes

Alec Sanders

opting to name his twin sons

Xander and Zander

colleagues dubbing

the expert on palindromes

Dr. Awkward

the sheriff

defining *unarm* as

take heat from

the watchmaker

regarding *time* as

a show of hands

after thirty years,

still wishing he could believe

his wife's compliments

gourmets deeming
the celebrated French chef

Childlike

New York City teen
sending friends postcards from
Manhattan, Kansas

amidst loud applause,
the renowned archer noting
he aimed to please

tenth grader counting
the number of expletives
in *Goodfellas*

twelfth grader counting
the number of bare bottoms
in *Boogie Nights*

Latin student
cursing autocorrect
for *ipso fatso*

Psych student
cursing autocorrect
for *Carl Junk*

Chem student
cursing autocorrect
for *conjugal base*

Bio student
cursing autocorrect
for *pinhead gland*

ophthalmologist
shocked to learn cataracts
are waterfalls

her boyfriend trying
to assert convincingly
Your hair looks fine

his girlfriend trying
to assert convincingly
It's just a cold sore

two Princeton deans
debating which are worse:
man boobs or buck teeth

Aunt Peg explaining
why she yaks so much:
I'm Himalayan

a young girl asking
the gravely ill atheist
Can I pray for you?

Author's Note

Dr. Robert H. Deluty is Associate Dean Emeritus of the Graduate School at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. A psychology professor at UMBC from 1980 to 2016, he was named Presidential Teaching Professor in 2002. He and his wife, Barbara (a clinical psychologist), live in Ellicott City, Maryland and have two children, Laura and David, and three granddaughters, Ava, Claire, and Diana. Dr. Deluty's poems and essays have been published in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Baltimore Sun*, *The Pegasus Review*, *Modern Haiku*, *Voices: The Art and Science of Psychotherapy*, *Psychiatric Times*, *Jewish Currents*, the *Journal of Poetry Therapy*, *Welcome Home*, *Muse of Fire*, *Maryland Family Magazine*, *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture*, *The Faculty Voice*, and many other newspapers, journals, and anthologies. *Momentary Blessings* is his fifty-sixth book.

