**Praise for Poems From the Wilderness:**

“These poems, entered into the notebooks of Long Trail shelters by Jack Mayer’s avatar the Mountain Poet, recall such earlier wilderness poets as Han Shan and Gary Snyder. Like those ancestors’ dispatches from the heights, they combine reflections on time and reality with the glow of physical exertion in the open air. Mayer’s humor also bubbles up in ways that make his voice a distinctive and delightful addition to this lineage.”  
 —**John Elder**, author of Reading the Mountains of Home  
  
“Ever since Emerson sent American poets into the woods to discover their souls, the connections between language and spirit have been steadily forged on this continent. Jack Mayer is a writer I've long admired, and in these bright, sensuous, deeply reflective poems we encounter a wilderness that exists on many levels: the Vermont trails that he loves, walks and dreams, and the contours of his own expansive spirit. I read these poems with increasing pleasure, and plan to return to them again and again. Mayer is a fine, fresh voice in American poetry.”  
 —**Jay Parini**, author of New and Collected Poems, 1975-2015, The Last Station, Benjamin’s Crossing, and Robert Frost: A Life

“The American state of Vermont—and by extension the wider world—has gained a winner in the poet Jack Mayer. Who would have thought that Walt Whitman would ever return? In his nature-reverent, creation-respecting poems celebrating the great outdoors and asking the profound questions pertaining to human existence, Mayer has not only taken on the spiritual mantle of Whitman, but has given it his own always candid, humble and awed veneer, across more than 55 concise pieces. Refreshing, reflective, rewarding.”  
 —**Vaughan Rapatahana**, poet, literary critic, essayist and novelist, winner of the inaugural Proverse Prize for poetry  
  
“Jack Mayer’s free verse, like his universe, is ruled by the poet’s inveterate unity with nature; he is one with the mountain birds, contemplating an American landscape that shapes his poetry and is shaped by it. Finding sacredness in the most common sights and sounds of nature, he tries to make sense out of memory and time through hiking and looks at man’s paradoxical insignificance and centrality in God’s creation. From dizzying heights, he surveys human civilization, and its discontents, with a scientific eye which knows that there is something in the human experience that escapes science – something that makes him animate his hiking tools, giving them life, lamenting their decay, and mourning their death. The hiking trails, the memories, and poetry are all things that Mayer has learned to master, yet they keep fascinating him endlessly.”  
 —**Ahmed Elbeshlawy**, scholar of comparative literature based in Hong Kong and author of Savage Charm (Proverse, 2019)

*"How humbling to carry everything  
on my back,  
for no human voice  
to scatter the sanctity."*

This moving collection of poems immerses the reader in the natural world and expounds on the solace and solitude that comes from hiking countless miles on trails through wilderness, mountains, and forests. Mayer contemplates the intersection of metaphysics, physics, and spirit as he observes nature on his many hikes along Vermont’s Long Trail, parts of the Appalachian Trail, and through the White Mountains. With stunning imagery, his poems transport the reader to a world of trees, plants, and birds through the seasons. He also digs into his own life and work as a doctor and hospice volunteer, allowing meditations on healing and death to enter alongside his experiences on the trail. He follows a long tradition of poets and thinkers who seek in nature the truth of the human condition.

Divided into five sections, the collection moves harmoniously through the terrain of the forest and the trail, exploring philosophy, religion, history, and memory. Mayer contemplates more than just the scenery and the reverie it inspires; he also expounds on the beauty and miracle of science with poems about Einstein, dark matter, and the God particle. He entwines the majestic mysteries of life with scientific knowledge and discovery, finding himself and his own truths about life in these two studies. Nature, it seems for the author, is the perfect laboratory for exploring both wonder and science. His thoughtful, intelligent observations from the “cosmological wilderness” reveal not only the invisible winds, footfalls, and crinkling dead leaves but also an understanding of desire, grace, and frailty.

While hiking, Mayer fully embodies the Mountain Poet, which is the trail name he acquires and, with it, an identity that he embraces, for his writing life is tied tightly to his life on the trails. In one poem, he offers gratitude for nature’s inspiration:

*“As ‘Mountain Poet,’  
I thank the earth for this  
astounding writing desk,  
this palette of water colours,  
mist today, hard sun tomorrow.”*

This communion with nature on the trail that Mayer eloquently calls his “enduring house of worship” provides wisdom and revelations and showcases the enduring bond between humans and the natural world. Fans of poet Mary Oliver will find a similar voice extolling nature in the author’s poetry. Just as Oliver found respite and reward by observing the landscape she loved, so Mayer finds and reveals the startling truths to be found on the trails that he loves and on which he has traveled so many miles. Like Oliver, Mayer sees all of nature as a metaphor for the human condition. For example, the first poem of the collection explores the search for self while on the trail out in nature, away from expectations and the influence of others.

Mayer’s work also complements the works of writers who have written prose and poetry about walking as a means of understanding. Robert Macfarlane, Rebecca Solnit, and even Henry David Thoreau have all written about the meditative power of walking. Mayer joins this tribe of writing walkers with his own poems from the wilderness.

**-RECOMMENDED by the US Review of Books** - review by Michelle Jacobs

*“Poems from the Wilderness* lives up to its name, presenting poetry composed on the trail by American doctor/poet Jack Mayer, who celebrates nature with his prize-winning observations. These were composed during his lone hikes along Vermont’s Long Trail and parts of the Appalachian Trail and White Mountains, over a forty year period.

“Jack Mayer began writing poetry during his career as a doctor to help him absorb the challenges of handling patient lives and medical conditions, and several poems reflect this perspective.

“His encounters in nature, through forests and on trails, and the philosophical and spiritual reflections that stemmed from these encounters with self and environment form a strong foundation of free verse replete in spirited and quiet contemplations alike: *"Time goes this way, and that way,/and backwards, and not at all./On the trail I can accept all of it,/believe (given the benefit of doubt),/that all is true./I listen for truth in wilderness./Since we can never know,/does it matter?"*

“Readers of Walt Whitman, Thoreau, and other nature writers well know the power of nature on the contemplative literary voyager who would survey the wilderness with an eye to rejuvenating soul and perspective. These audiences will especially appreciate Mayer's attention to connecting natural with human affairs, as in 'True North', which addresses navigation challenges of not just the environment, but the soul: *"My compass, though scuffed and dented/points magnetic North./When I’ve been lost,/it was not for want of magnetic North,/only my failure to follow the meridian./...My compass needle points me/through that mysterious space/where intuition and ‘the old ways’ reside uneasily/with Dark Energy and quantum uncertainty./More problematic is navigating my soul/with neither compass nor map,/only memory."*

*“Poems from the Wilderness* is the recipient of the Proverse Prize, an international contest in Hong Kong which includes publication for those who win. It is a testimony to outstanding writing that will especially delight fellow poets and nature enthusiasts who look for winning ways with words and reflections that begin with nature encounters and move outward like ripples in powerful literary waters.

- **Midwest Book Review -** D. Donovan, Senior Reviewer

- **Donovan's Literary Services** **-** D. Donovan, Senior Reviewer