

Poet for the common man

*Every day
events
provide
inspiration*

Back in the late 1960's a young postal carrier spent his off-time scribbling little poems. The words were straightforward, the rhymes were simple, the themes were the common man's, each had a creative twist as unique as the writer himself. The man's name is John Prine, and he is today one of the most heralded folk song writers of the last 20 years.

Walking the streets of Prince George, with a heavy mail bag slung over his shoulder, is another postal carrier who likes to scribble down poetic verse in the language of the every-man. He is Jack Bradbury, and he has just been published in his first anthology.

The book is *Sparkles In The Sand*, a publication of the National Library of Poetry in Maryland. The poem is a short piece enti-



The Shabby Little House

The shabby little house down the block
Seemed deserted, always locked

I passed it by many times
Lawn uncut, weeds were high
The porch was rotten, fence long forgotten

Curtains drawn blocked out the light
Sun bleached boards, no paint in sight
Red brick fireplace, bricks all tight
Kept the shabby house, warm at night

Walking home one starlit night
I was amazed, a sign of life
For in the window, a candle burned bright
I stopped and stared, the candle glared
As if to say
Think what you may, think what you might
There's life in here
Behind the candle light

tled "The Shabby Little House."

"Being a mailman, I've seen many shabby little houses," says Jack, explaining the inspiration of his prize poem. "I wrote 'The Shabby Little House' back about 1990. I was inspired by the places I'd put mail where I never saw anybody living. They were dumpy little shacks in Fort

St. John, although they're here as well, and you would swear nobody was

there but the mail would be gone the next day."

These observations are the bulk of Jack's subject matter. He writes what he sees, and what he thinks other people may have seen too, but perhaps hadn't noticed. He hand writes his poems, sometimes even on napkins, and keeps every thought he scribbles down. The University of the Full Life is where he earned his degree.

"I'm not an educated man at all," he says with a streak of pride but a tinge of regret in his voice.

"I've been writing like this for about 25 years. I don't use flowery words; I don't understand that kind of thing. I write simple poems for simple people. I checked into a hotel one time and the desk clerk gave me a calendar. In return I reached into my pocket and pulled out a wallet-sized copy of 'The Shabby Little House' said

'Here, this is a poem I've written that maybe you'd like to read.'

"When I came down the next day the clerk had to tell me how much the staff loved it, and how it reminded them of the shabby houses they'd seen in their lives. Making people react that way is the success I'm looking for."

Compounding that success, however, is the news that he is being added to the *Sparkles In The Sand* volume. The National Library of Poetry puts out regular publications to promote up-and-coming poets, and also provides cash prizes as well.

In Jack's case, he was chosen as a winner of the Editor's Choice Award, and was also informed that he will have two more poems published in upcoming NLP tones.

He has clearly proven that he can deliver letters on the street, and on the page as well.

Blues night/Rockin' in '96



Jamie Strobl of the Catfish Blues was rockin' on New Year's Eve. The band brought in 1996 at the Simon Fraser Inn. TONYA HARTZ/FREE PRESS

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