

## **A Tribute to Max R. - My Friend on the Mountain**

One day, while trying to cross a mountain,  
I was washing my soul under a fountain.  
I looked to the skies with tears in my eyes,  
crying, "God, why are your promises just lies?!"

Suddenly, a man appeared big and bright,  
He spoke from his heart and relieved my fright.  
I moaned, "This mountain's big and I'm so ill."  
He smiled and said, "Together, it's just a hill."

I talked of mountains I had crossed before,  
of strength I once possessed, but had no more.  
He talked of mountains he had crossed before,  
and the miles he had walked with feet so sore.

"Fear is the opposite of Faith," he said.  
Then he cooled his feet and relaxed his head.  
"To climb a mountain, and make it a hill,  
you must rest your soul to regain your will!"

Taking his lead, I relaxed for some sleep,  
so the pain in my heart wouldn't hurt so deep.  
I dreamed of times on a sunny, clear beach,  
a place in Life I knew we both could reach.

When morning brought the sun and its new day,  
we stood up to walk with nothing to say.  
We knew our path would be Divinely shown,  
and neither must cross this mountain alone.

We walked for days, sharing the other's pain,  
using each other, instead of a cane.  
When sickness would slow us on our way,  
we knew we could make it, just for that day.

Under the stars we would study our strife,  
learning a new lesson about man's Life.  
"You're a Teacher," he'd say, "fine and prudent!"  
I'd shake my head, "No, I'm just a student."

As we scaled a hill on our rocky plight,  
we noticed a bird in its fearless flight.  
Trying to figure what the bird sees,  
we saw the forest, despite the trees.

From winged flight the mountain must appear nil,  
just little slopes creating a huge hill.  
With this thought we found a new way to climb,  
we would just scale each hill, one at a time.

Climbing little hills could be fun, we thought,  
with life in abundance, for those who sought.  
A mountain is too high for any man,  
so, one at a time must be our new plan.

Deciding together, peace we would seek,  
we explored the valleys under each peak.  
We found them full of trees, snakes, worms and birds,  
a natural life for which we had no words.

Having the strength, we would search a new trail,  
when it was a good one, our God we'd hail!  
Around the mountain we would explore and laugh,  
walking on the same, but different path.

My friend was a man of books and hard work,  
after a while, he figured out my quirk.  
"You have the gift of words and they won't stop,"  
he laughed, then gave me *See You at The Top*.

I would read his book and put it away,  
there were thoughts in there I needed to say.  
I would practice them on his open ear,  
knowing it was what he needed to hear.

We would stop and look over our shoulder,  
studying every rock and boulder.  
"Look how far we've come," he'd say with relief,  
together, we would strengthen our belief.

We walked miles and miles, our souls we would share,  
when either would hurt, the other would care.  
To walk alone, we knew we were too weak,  
but together, we would conquer the peak.

One day when I was exploring alone,  
I received the news that my friend was gone.  
I looked down the hill weak enough to fall,  
but remembered, "strength for one day, that's all."

He left the mountain with a spirit free.  
Recalling our climb, I began to see,  
that a man is a man, and meant to be.  
Thank you, God, for having Max walk with me.

Michael L. Piazza  
1982