

## **Mike Ross—Hooked on Poetry (continued)**

**with Larry Hamilton**

“I can’t say I know exactly what poetry is,” he says, “I just know for sure when I have read a good poem.” He maintains that everyone has within himself or herself resources to write good poems. “All you have to do is read a bunch of poems you like, and then take a stab at it yourself.” And stay at it. “Poetry is both an art and craft: the more you do it, the better you will get. You almost can’t help yourself.” And don’t throw any of your drafts away. “Sometimes the poem is better than you think it is. Let the poem sit for six weeks. Then look at it again. I guarantee you will see a strategy to improve it.”

Mike’s own favorite poets are almost too numerous to list, but William Butler Yeats and Emily Dickinson are near the top. Mike’s first book of poetry, *Small Engine Repair*, was published by Finishing Line Press in 2015. He is working on a second book of poems, with a working title of Ports of Call.

Born in Detroit, Mike grew up in Cleveland. He attended a small Jesuit school there, now John Carroll University, and received a Master’s and Ph.D. in English Literature from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. He taught courses at the University of Michigan, and later at Empire State College, Pace University, and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Most of his professional activities involved writing technical and public relations documents, fundraising proposals, and speeches, primarily at educational institutions. It was at Rensselaer that he met and married his wife of 33 years, Fran. For 10 years, Mike ran his own freelance writing business in Troy, New York.

Mike and Fran retired in 2006 and moved to Asheville, in his words, “to get away from snow and six-month winters.” His fall course at OLLI is called *Telling It Slant: A Poetry Writing Course*. The title is inspired by Emily Dickinson, who famously advised aspiring poets, “Tell the truth, but tell it slant.”