

clam up or else it's a whole new
ball game. They never clam up.
He's still going on about being
lost in a desert without beer
when Captain Kirk's face materializes
on the tube. That's strike three,
you're out, big mouth, take the big hike.
He doesn't understand the rules
to this new game. They never do.

SPEED DEMON

He was just what every
bar needs -- a large
filthy man in a red
flannel shirt. Smelled
like the second coming
of a lord of the flies
ordering a double martini
over ice that seemed
doomed never to acquire
the proper chill.
I didn't know where he
was going but he sure
as hell was going to
get there fast.

-- Alan Catlin

Schenectady NY

PAPER

I work in a mailroom
fold it, stuff it
weigh it, meter it
count it, jam it into big green mail sacks
open it, date stamp it, route it, sort it.
Heft around heavy boxes of it
stack boxes of it in a storeroom full of it,
copy it on a xerox machine making more paper
all day moving paper around.

I pity the poor bastards who have to read
the crap. How well I know their plight,
nodding off over yet another dull report,
wading through the seas of junk mail
that floods their desk every day.

Money too is paper. I don't make enough
at my job in the mailroom, so when I get home
I work at my mail order business, selling books.
More paper: letters, purchase orders, catalogs.
And the books themselves, paper again. That's
all I do, fuck with paper.

Once in a while
if I'm lucky
I'll have a free hour or two
to sit and write poems
on paper.

Or I'll make
a couple drawings,
do a water color painting,
paper.

Today, a Saturday, I had all day
and no paper. I ran out of it. All that
was left was some odd blue and pink crap
that they throw out at work. You can't write
poems on blue and pink paper. At least I can't.
I got depressed, read until I couldn't stand
to read another word, then just lay on the floor
in a tiny square of sunlight, dozing,
thinking of books I would write someday,
of magazines that would print my unwritten
poems, of the paper they would print
the magazines on, my words on paper,
and just the paper itself,
without the words,
white in the sunlight.

-- David Barker

Salem OR