

Little House On The Great Plains

The first night rats trundled
through the walls, Hilda
cried and kept the baby in bed.
He laid out poison and they died.
One thrashing and screaming
in the basement, the rest
between partitions. Hilda
couldn't stand the smell.
He knocked the walls out
and found a chest full of money.
They paid off the car and bought
the sailboat he'd always wanted.
The boy's dog keeps the rats out
now, the neighbors are very nice
for the most part and Hilda
is real busy making the house
into a home for all of them.

About Song My, Since You Ask

When those yahoos shot those boys
in Mississippi I imagine
at least one yahoo was smiling.
I tend to think it was
an "embarrassed smile"
though it was probably dark
and no one was looking at anyone else.

Just see yourself out in the woods,
all that stupid moss in the trees,
knowing you're going to die.
Shit! I really did it this time!
All those dimstore loafers so excited
they're forgetting and slapping
their boils, drinking too fast.

Brush your teeth but your breath
stinks. So you chew gum.
You sweat, your hair cream
won't work, your wife sleeps
around. Your girl does too.
Best goddam country in the world
and all you've got is pimples and a hurt.

Those boys over in the Nam
didn't want to die either.
It was hot, they were scared.
All those ugly slime screaming
and pleading in gobble-de-gook

for their lives. If you shoot mamma-
san, you have to shoot the kids too.

It's the secret fear, unspoken truth
that twists the heart to any frenzy.

Rejecting Advice

Oh, you poets
with hidden rooms
called the study.
Or better yet
reconverted henhouses.
Let me tell you
right now
I won't improve with age,
or do what I want.
So shut up.

-- William Hathaway

Ithaca, New York

16 Jap Machinegun Bullets

Norman
Jimmy
Max killed in World War II
while I hid in old roominghouses
in Philadelphia and San
Francisco
listening to
Mozart and Bach.

with George it was a bad
liver. Dale died of mislead
ambition. Nick went the common hard way of
cancer.
Harry of a
wife and 5 beautiful children.

Jimmy had it right --
trying to bring that bomber back to
England with half the motors shot
out. Norman had it
right --
taking 3 weeks to die from
16 Jap machinegun bullets.

we've all got it quite right --
sitting around reading the
comic strips