

When a man with

far above average intelligence  
far above average athletic skill  
better than average good looks  
a decent amount of common sense  
an engaging personality  
a Toyota car  
the governor's pool table  
a 38 caliber pistol  
a new pair of shoes  
a lifetime inheritance & a  
brace of good friends  
thinks life is not worth  
living,

you wonder what it is  
he missed.

Uncle Jim

A little kid in New York City  
my father away at war  
Uncle Jim would come around  
late at night  
fall on the floor  
wrap his arms around his head.  
He had migraines  
& a drinking habit.  
My mother gave him aspirin  
wet towels across his head  
I'd fall asleep in the easy chair,  
curious but not sorry.

Uncle Jim ran little stores  
bought them from Italians  
& Poles  
who couldn't make it work  
made it work  
made these great ham & cheese  
sandwiches  
with kosher pickles.

The last store he made work  
for five years  
then disappeared in New York City.

He surfaced ten years later  
skin & bones  
covered with bruises & scars  
delirious & pleading  
to be made a priest.

The relatives  
put him in a hospital  
with a Catholic sounding name  
Saint something or other  
gave him glasses  
& yanked out his teeth,  
put twenty pounds on his bones  
before he died.

#### The Coach

was short & squat  
an Indian they said  
never spoke a word to me  
in the two years I was there,  
knew I drank & smoked &  
screwed around.

Landing in that  
new town with the  
wrong foot forward,  
never gaining balance,  
fights suspensions  
midnight cruises,

& then that spring I  
ran the mile,  
just got on the bus  
with the team,  
got on the track &  
ran, barely moving by the  
end, lousey time & I  
puked after I  
finished but I  
finished.

Down in the locker room they  
laid it on, for one whole  
week they  
laid it on,  
& then the coach  
slammed a locker with his  
fist to create silence.  
Lay off! he said.