and a picture of the bust ended up as frontispiece.

the other night some girls who had somehow heard about the bust asked me about it and i had to tell them that the sculptress had written me that she'd moved to phoenix, opened a beer bar, installed the bust, and inevitably the bust had gotten busted by a drunk.

but i got out the book of stories and showed them the frontispiece.

"oh well," they agreed, "it didn't look like you anyhow."

PEOPLE ARE LOSING THE ABILITY TO MAKE DISTINCTIONS

i would be the first to admit that my daughters are probably the only women i have ever loved selflessly,

but already unloved women are suggesting to my daughters that, since i have never loved other women selflessly, i can't be capable of so loving them.

THE END OF AN ERA

dear brenda, i got up early and, as i had promised you, i was at the sears store a half-hour before it opened. there were already about three hundred people lined up outside the tickettron entrance. i recognized one of my students about a hundred people ahead of me in line; he waved to me to join him.
at first i virtuously refused, but when i noticed throngs of aging flower-children cutting in line ahead of me, i sidled up to him. fortunately, the five girls behind him declined to tear me to shreds.
at eleven the manager announced that friday was sold out. by eleven-thirty, saturday and sunday were gone. at noon, it was announced that only single seats remained. a lot of people left. i stayed and moved close to the door.
by now my back was killing me, from my having stood on one or the other of my deadened legs, like an obese heron, for at least three hours. i hadn't had any breakfast. my student had scrounged only one section of the morning paper: the letters to the editor.

i was ten people from the counter when all performances were officially declared sold out.

brenda, i hope your idol, zimmerman, swallows his fucking harmonica.

WRITE ME OFF AND OUT

My one friend tells the other that he is thinking of opening a beer bar and the second friend tells the first that he could use a write-off, and the first says, "I'm just the man for you: the last restaurant I owned lost forty thousand in a year."

MECHANICS

Although I'm nearly thirty-seven, the man with the Texaco star always refers to me as "Buster," "Skipper," or "Sonny," and once he called me by some name so juvenile that these friends and I still laugh about it, although we can't seem to remember what it was.

Recently, though, from an article in the local paper, he found out that I pass, in certain of the less discriminating circles, as a poet, so now he asks me where he can buy my books, and I hedge on that, because I'm pretty sure my literary standing in the grease pits is bound to be diminished by close familiarity of the works themselves.