

## LAST OF THE BIG SPENDERS

after the matinee  
i treat us to a lunch  
at musso's.  
to hold down the tab  
i order only a half a head of lettuce  
for myself. then i finish  
up my wife's welsh rarebit  
and my son's ravioli,  
and i wipe up the sauce  
from my daughter's spaghetti  
with the great sourdough bread.

noticing at a nearby table  
four of the actresses  
from the play we have just seen,  
i rise and approach them:  
"excuse me," i say, "we enjoyed  
the show very much,"  
and i return to the table.

"why did you do that?"  
my wife asks me. "you never do  
that sort of thing, and besides  
i thought you were bored by the play."

"i was hoping," i tell her,  
"they might offer me their leftovers."

## I SUSPECT OUR FUTURE CONVERSATION WILL BE ALTERED

he's a bright, talented, and interesting guy,  
and i've enjoyed running into him  
every year or two  
and sharing a couple drinks and stories.  
it's been eight or nine years  
since he was in my classes.

but he's also a hustler, a con-man,  
on the golf course or with women,  
especially those who have money,  
and he thought he had me conned  
back in the good old days.

so, after all these years,  
and i'm not even sure why,  
i picked one particular night  
of this particular year,  
and i finally said to him,



"you know, when you were taking english 459, i knew all the time you were getting the answers from the pretty, longlegged, skinny, blackhaired girl, who always sat next to you in the back row. i knew it because i was going out with her."

i'm not bluffing,  
and he doesn't bother to deny it.

he does a good job of maintaining his composure, even admits he was doing quite a bit of cheating in those days and that he figured there wasn't that much to be learned in school anyway.

"not if you never crack a book," i say.

later he says, "why didn't you flunk me?"

"three reasons," i say: "first of all, hardly anyone, including me, was flunking anyone in those days; secondly, i figured it was no skin off my ass; but most importantly, i considered the evidence inadmissible."

#### THE ROAR OF THE GREASEPAINT

when my daughter does something praiseworthy, such as counting to five for the first time, we clap for her and she claps for herself. loudly, joyously, unabashedly, she applauds her accomplishment. you and i are not allowed to lead the cheers for ourselves. we are supposed to be unaffected by our successes, practically oblivious to them. it is considered the worst of form to sing one's own praises, to toot one's own horn.

then again, if we were allowed to lead our own cheers, we might discover that there wasn't all that much to cheer for anyway.