

"I used to be nothing," says Steve on TV,
"But now, Wormwood Hills has changed my life.
I'm cured completely -- no more rejections for me!"

"You too can overcome your fear of wit and intelligence.
Impress your friends! Impress your publisher!
Skizzle to your heart's desire!
Call now! Toll free, 1-800-452-4836,
Wisecracking operators are standing by!"

FORT ROCK

This is not the Oregon
They hear about somewhere else.
It is open, sagebrush and desert,
The domain of cowboy philosopher Reub Long
Who claimed he was eighteen years old
Before he saw his first rain:
"And then," he said, "the drops were so big
They knocked me out cold!
Why, they had to throw six buckets of sand
In my face to bring me around!"

It is Reub who donated Fort Rock
For an Oregon state park,
And we drive for miles
Across the flatness to reach it,
Suddenly startled by the immensity
Of this volcanic crater remnant,
Sheer basaltic cliffs rising three hundred feet
Complete with wave-cut terraces
Carved by an extinct lake.
Pioneers, they say, used
The three-sided fortress
For protection against the Indians;
And found nearby in a cave,
Perfectly-preserved sagebrush sandals
Now dated at over 9000 years.
It is all a fitting memorial
To this man Reub, who spent his life
Preserving the treasures of this desert.

At the parking lot
Frantic teenagers race motorcycles,
While their placid families,
Lolling beside Airstream trailers
Drawl over corn on the cob.
We follow an arguing married couple
Up the trail to the viewpoint
And the Reub Long Memorial:

"Why, I didn't know Reub Long was dead," whispers the wife.
"You didn't even know he was alive." mocks the husband.
And the argument is cut short
Only by the rain which begins to fall,
The wife covering her head with a highway map
To preserve her hairstyle
As they slog the distance in rubber sandals
Back to the parking lot.

-- Michael Anderson

Ashland OR

POSSESSING EVERY FROZEN DELICACY

The Poet stood before the Servomation machines.
He wanted a chocolate-covered vanilla bar.
Someone had to show Him how to operate
the ice cream machine: "You lift the door
and pull out the ice cream," one of many
followers explained.

He knew Jack Kerouac.
Jack thought He was kind of thin-skinned.

"I can't get the ice cream out,"
He whined. Four or five followers
reached over His shoulders to assist Him.
They were having a great deal of trouble.

William Carlos Williams admired Him
when He was young; Williams has been long
dead.

We were standing there by the Servomation
machines watching all this -- my friend Paul,
a big, slightly loud Vietnam vet, and I --
and Paul suggested, "Blow on it!"
They all stopped and looked at us;
Paul qualified: "If you blow on it, the ice
cream will melt a little and you can take
it out."

Neal Cassady was His lover for a while;
Cassady was practically everybody's lover
for a while.

Finally they got the ice cream bar out
for Him. All they had to do was pull up
the shelf it rested on. Paul said, in his