

As Kit and I walked
through the mall
I looked at the faces
of the men we passed
and they seemed to be
as bitter,
as petty,
as spiteful
as those of the women
And Kit wonders why
I don't like to shop in malls.

DOG TAGS

We had to wear dog tags
to elementary school
when I was a kid
in California
during World War II.
Most people on the coast
thought the Japs
were going to attack
any day,
bombing us to bits,
and the authorities
wanted to be able
to identify
our little bodies.

Each morning
we went off to school
in the California sunshine,
our dog tags
hanging from our necks
like medallions;
none of us thought about
what they meant,
about dying. Sometimes
we'd play cowboys and Indians
on our way to school,
shouting, "Bang, bang,
you're dead,"
holding our guts
as we fell to the sidewalk.
We died smiling, brave,
not at all like
the way most of us
would really die,
kicking and screaming.

-- Arthur Winfield Knight
California PA