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WORRIER

I'm alone
(wife in city)
worrying neighbors will
invite me to dinner.
Consider changing into
bathrobe, swabbing throat
with Mentholatum,
but realize worry
is pushing me
into a lie,
& if I've got
any character
I'll tell them (gently)
I'm uncomfortable
in their company &
prefer to eat alone ...
worry (as we all know)
is an exercise
in futility.
They never called.

— Phil Weidman

GRETEL

I feel sorry
for our dobie.
She doesn't
have hands.
She does her
loving with a
soft pink tongue
backed by a
set of shark
white teeth.

MY JOB

My job (as I
see it) is to
set down
clean & clear
the substance
of my passage,
generating (along
the way) what
light I can.

FIFTYONE

A fortune teller,
18 years ago,
predicted a
devastating crisis
in my 50th year.
My left hand life
line splits half way
down, my right hand
line swerves then
continues strong.
I've always favored
my right hand.

ESCAPE THE MUSIC

Highway 80 to Reno
was blocked off
below Truckee for
six hours today.
Trucker with load
of diesel flipped
his rig spreading
a wall of fire
across both lanes.
Highway patrol figured
driver got burned
up in the blaze
but he escaped,
leaving hitchhiker to fry,
& hopped an east
freight to Sparks.

TRICK

Sold Luger I
used to keep
under pillow.
Bought 22/410
over & under
which is safer
but can still
do the trick.

FREEZE

I hate to answer
the phone. I'm
afraid my blind
aunt Joyce will
say my mother
just died, &
I'll freeze, not
knowing what
the hell to do.

ZOO VISIT

Visited Sacramento zoo
Sunday which
saddened me.
Only creatures to lift
my spirits were
sparrows darting
in & out
of the cages.

SCRATCHING MY HEAD

Want to sit outside
enjoy clean mountain
air but mosquitoes
are ravenous, can
drill thru socks &
thin hair, so give
up, go inside,
sit by window &
look out at two
lodgepole pine in
next lot recently
killed by beetles
& wonder, scratching
my head, if our
trees are safe, if
there's a safe place
for any of us, if
dying is merely
the last in a
long line of tests.

NINE DAFFODILS

Cut nine daffodils
Sunday & squeezed
them into clear,
narrow throated
vase, then added
cool water &
set them out
to be admired.
Tuesday they're drooping
as if they've
lost all desire
to be beautiful,
lost all hope
of reuniting
with their roots,
& I decide
to cut no more.

POSTCARD FROM LISA

Our daughter has grown
& left us.
I'm looking at a postcard
she sent us two months ago
from Santa Cruz
picturing a lighthouse
on a point of land
embroidered with wild flowers.
Happy Easter
she writes.
Her words get smaller
& multiply toward
bottom of the card.
She squeezes love
comma her name
into the corner.

OUR IDEAL

Why do I still
watch boxing?
Truth is, I don't
enjoy it as
I once did.
But I watch.
It's a tough
exacting sport
at its best.
Some think brutal.
Sometimes it is.
It seems the
opposite of
love, our ideal.
But it's the way
most of us want
to live, taking
chances to excel,
kicking the shit
out of ghosts.
I watch simply
to forget myself
for a while.

— Phil Weidman

North Highlands CA

THE MAN WHO KNEW WILLIAM FAULKNER

w.e. and mrs. e and the toad and ray
sat at the table and tried to talk,
but the piano player of the saloon
at the hotel stater played every request
with a lot of pedal, so that "the yellow
rose of texas," and "jambalaya," and
"a rainy night in georgia," and a lot of
other songs that the cowboys there
asked to hear, ended up sounding about
the same — loud.

w.e. kept looking over at the piano
player, as if he'd have shot him had he
been a gunfighter, a hundred years before.

then the piano player took a break
and it was nice and quiet, so. w.e. said,
"when I went down to oxford, to see
faulkner, I asked him if there was a good
restaurant in town. he said, 'sure.
there's a good one down at the end of this
street, on the right.'
and I said, 'is the food any good?'
'no,' he said, 'but they'll turn the music
down, if you ask them.'"

THE MAN WITH A BAD HABIT

We were out at Mr. Pete's place
in the middle of Navajo Land and
Mr. Pete and Sam and I stood beside
the pickup truck and talked about
what the Hopis would do next about
the land dispute.

It was about a hundred miles or so
to the next cigarette machine,
but we'd brought a supply along.
Sam took out a cigarette and I
took one out and we lit up.

Then I looked over at Mr. Pete
and he was patting his shirt pockets,
as if he'd left his cigarettes behind.
So I said, "I'm sorry, Mr. Pete, I
didn't know you smoked." And
I gave him a cigarette and lit it
for him.

Then he said, "Sure, I smoke a cigarette every couple of years or so."

— Rafael Zepeda

Long Beach CA

MORE EFFECTS OF UNCLE GEORGE'S TRUNK

Photograph dated September 10, 1910

Two men stand, each with an arm over the other's shoulder, beside a dead elk. Though they are cheerful, they smile at the camera with some little embarrassment; it is as though the lens, in the twilight before an illuminating flash, had seen these two men kissing. One is Uncle George and the other is his best friend Franz.

Mountains rise behind them, and because this is a black-and-white photograph, one might say that these are blood-dark mountains or mountains as dark as Uncle George's hair. It could be somewhere in the Absaroka Range of Wyoming; or it could be in the magnificently staged studio of one Erwin J. Petersen, Photographer, of Grand Island, Nebraska. No one can say: The men look real, the elk seems sufficiently dead, the mountains appear to be steep and wooded.

The moment itself can be photographed but cannot be seen. The moment itself is as real as Whitman's wired butterfly, an instant in which the feelings of two men for each other broke forth and appeared in beauty and grace, alit on their linked shoulders for a moment of wonder, and then disappeared into a sky that is never the same.

DISENFRANCHISEMENT

An acquaintance, who is both a clown hater and a food snob, dreams of assassinating Ronald McDonald. He will follow the clown everywhere, never letting the oversized shoes out of his sight. At the opportune moment he will ambush the corporate symbol with frozen hamburger patties and hope that the effects will be lethal. Or he will challenge Herr McDonald to a duel: Chicken McNuggets at ten paces. Seconds will hold three sauces at the ready.

His friends try to steer him toward nonviolent alternatives. Open up a competing business, they tell him, it's the American way. Thus far, it has come to naught. His plans for McDuck fell through. The bank loan officer expressed some interest, but denied the application on the absurd grounds that Canard a l'Orange would not fit through a take-out window. In hopes of compromise, the would-be entrepreneur promised to offer pressed duck as well. Surely, he thought, in this age of sophisticated cuisine, there is ample room at the table for haut fast food. But, alas, his plans came to not one avail. Failure also attended his dreams for McBoar, Squab King and Venison Hut.

So now he broods over a bowl of mercilessly unrestrained bitter herbs. He envisions a world free of clowns, who have assumed for him the sinister import of freemasons. Why, he asks, does one never see only one clown? Why is it that they frighten and allure at the same time? What weapons do they conceal under their clothes? He sees clowns slipping in their own blood, their fright wigs for once a true barometer of feeling. It is an American way.

PETS

He beats his life until it cringes or attacks. He refuses to clean up after it.

He teaches his disappointment to whistle. Each night he lowers a cloth over its cage and uncovers it in the morning: it mimics each note of his song.

He would like to teach his anxiety to roll over and play dead.

He walks his brain in public: how carefully it is groomed, each hair in its place, perfumed, obedient.

Late at night he strokes his loneliness. It sits in his lap, eyes closed, demanding his attention. The more he strokes, the louder it purrs.

With both hands he carries his death, whose head looks over his shoulder. He found it at the door and couldn't turn it away.

— S. C. Hahn

Lincoln NE

STRAWBERRIES

Bulbous, fleshy, pitted, these topers' noses stick out of the rows: a field full of old men boozing in the sun. One looks for rheumy eyes, tobacco spit, leers.

And then they dye your fingers red a winter fishermen's, untimely lovers', actors' at the Globe.

Plucked with even moderate vigor, they deliquesce beneath the thumb.

Best taken from the cellar shelf in January as jam, their sweetness reinvents June on the tongue and sends the seasons round.

When all is said and done, however, they have their apotheosis in cream.

FENNEL

In Italian finnochio <L. feniculum <fenum, faenum = hay. Great ramping white stalks tasting like licorice; sweetroot, with delicate ferny tops, the flavor of antique pastoral. Lycoris's breath tickling the ear of Gallus, sweetening his horny work under the Tuscan sun.

With black olives, a white dream, a green spending.

Under salmon, a testimony to the wisdom of Ceres.

A little aftertaste of pleasure. Dream of repletion without surfeit.

THE ELBOW

Hinged crook, it can be folded like a fan, locked in place like a boomerang or a spear. Erect, it hangs at a civilizing angle, accommodating coat, cane, or the arm of a companion. Crouched, it lodges in the groin, protecting one from savagery.

Bone needle, one swings the arm on it like the fixed point of a compass — writing, shaking hands, masturbating.

How it bores through shirt sleeves, the arms of coats and sweaters.

Dug into the mattress, an anchor for the missionary position, keeping one high and true.

Careful, certain types will lodge it in the ribs, an alternative to wit.

THE NECK

Beheading wasn't really it. Severing the neck, a kind of superior castration. How it brought the crowds.

For the Japanese, of course, the neck is the erotic ne plus ultra. Small wonder.

Rising out of the clothes, naked, sinuous, beautifully muscled, it slopes gracefully from the shoulders, undulant, tapering toward the skull, inviting the hands to embrace its swelling mass, to caress it, pulsing with life, topped with the head knob, alive with slippery hair and flicking tongue.

And then it contains the voice box. The mystery of speech alive in that fluid column.

How can one chain it? It must be naked. Its decorations are the breasts. Its occupation is connection. Its accomplishment is song.

FINGERS

They can make a coin disappear, tie a knot, comb hair, or destroy the composure of woman.

Jointed like frog's legs, they hang in a tangle from the hand, ready to leap into action on cheek, breast, or thigh in the flash of an eye.

Used to beckon, warn, or beg, the middle one is reserved for rude asseveration.

Snap them for order. Whistle with them. Goose. Thumb your nose.

— W. A. Fahey

Northport NY

THIS LIGHT

This is serious light.
At the crack of dawn, this light
stopped the rain. This light
has the housetimbers talking to themselves.
This light bangs on eyelids
like a kid raised by wolves bangs on pots and pans.
Hardly started yet and this light already shows
powerful colors in the woods.
Got to put on dark clothes to walk around in this light.

PORTRAIT OF A LAMPLIT INTERIOR SUSPENDED OVER A HILLSIDE WITH OAKS AT DUSK

The reflected room cantilevers out
into dark, thin air
the other side of the picture window
backwards. There's the interior lamplight.
There's the walls blocking out the darkness.
There's the sink behind us hovering
under the dewline of the oak fifty feet away
filled with dirty dishes.
There's you and I at the table just cleared
seeing our other room with
ephemeral focus on our faces. There's no
real room out there. It's only
light from the house
reaching for the usual nothing
and being betrayed back to us. There'd
better not be any other place
than where we are; no room
where you and I pose
in light more wonderful than this.

DAWN RAIN

"Here's more," says the rain,
and sure enough,
down comes another shower

rinsing the shingles on the roof, front and back, and the house, it being morning, stretching its big dry shoulders into it.

"Like it?" the rain wants to know.
"Sure enough," smiles the house, with wet hair.

— Donald Schenker

Berkeley CA

MAGGIE & JIGGS
OR A SUGGESTED CURE FOR TWO CASES OF NECROPHILIA

My wife & I were watching this old
Ronald Coleman movie on late-night t.v.
when she said:

"Look at his bu-TI-ful eyes, look at that bu-TI-ful
profile. It's hard to believe such a handsome man
is dead & gone."

"Christ Almighty," I said, "what do you expect?
That goddam movie is sixty years old.
They must ALL be dead by now."

Then I went out to the john & took a good leak
& washed my hands & got another beer from the kitchen
& filled a bowl with more pretzels.

When I got back again, Ronnie was talking to this blonde
who was wearing some kind of low-cut negligee
& I said to my wife:

"Jeez, look at those bu-TI-ful boobs."

"Insect," said my wife, "have you no respect
for the dead & departed?"

"Hell," I said, "let's take a tumble in bed
while our bodies are still warm."

AS I SNARL BACK AT HER EYES IN THE DARK

The first time I saw her
she was crossing a Venetian square
wearing gilt-edged Slavic wings
that were not even wet coming in from the rain.

Her face is a blur now,
but the eyes were green & I remember her voice:
"Have you ever read Alexander Pushkin?" she asked.
"Oh yeah," I said. "Sure, sure."
& I bought her a glass of Pellegrino's Marsala.

We went north to the mountains & read Pushkin together;
then we went south again & lived on a canal
that reminded her of Petersburg before the revolution.

One night when her Slavic soul barely flickered,
she said: "Amore, you will not understand this ..."

but I did, I did

& then she went home to Sausalito, or some such place
where there were still Russian tea rooms
& I didn't hear from her for years
until somehow she found my number & calls me at 3 A.M.:
"I am living in Venice, California," she says,

"in a motel off the highway. I am divorced,
my daughter works in a whorehouse
& my son is currently on drugs."

"I'm sorry to hear that," I say.

"How is it with you?" she asks.

"I have taken up needlepoint," I say.
"I am very good at butterflies."

"There is this red neon sign," she says,
"right outside my window. It keeps me awake all night."

"Turn to the wall," I tell her.

"The light flashes on the WALL," she says.

"Close your eyes," I suggest.

"That's all very easy for you to say,
isn't it?" she snarls & hangs up

& I decide to request an unlisted number in the morning.

THE NEANDERTHAL MAN

We just came in off a night patrol
& were sitting around the command post at dawn
drinking coffee laced with a little grappa
when our new lieutenant

loosened his Italian silk scarf,
wiped a trickle of blood from his cheek
& said:

Do you fellows know
that this is the very same town
where Lt. Frederic Henry
met that beautiful English nurse
in A Farewell to Arms?

I was only a dumb corporal at the time,
but this news didn't exactly stun me to numbness;
I already knew that the officers
always got the best looking women,

but this Farewell to Arms thing
was something else,
it really had me puzzled:

I thought I had hit
every goddam saloon
in that lousy burg.

THE RAT IN A TRAP

I'm drinking a lousy local Chablis
at this progressive cocktail party
where the white stuff
in the silver bowl
isn't sugar,
you know,

when this bronzed incendiary,
who is also a female advertising exec,
swoops over & froths:
"Darling! What are you into these days?"

"I'm working for REDCOM XXII in Seattle,"
I tell her.

"Wonderful!" she gushes. "Is that one
of those new politically progressive
ecology magazines?"

"No," I say. "It's the naval warfare
Readiness Command."

"Oh, dear," she fizzles. "Whatever do you do there?"

"I'm an administrator," I say,
"in the Recruiting Directorate."

"GOD!" she squeals. "How did you ever get yourself into that trap?"

"Well," I say, "once it was thought I had some novels in me, but it turned out they were only poems."

& then the party resumes
despite my presence.

THE LINEUP

She comes into the Blue Beard room
where I do my writing
& stands behind my chair.

I stop typing & stare ahead at the wall
with the next line hanging by a hair
& wait,
but she doesn't say anything.

"Yeah?" I say finally.

"I was thinking ..." she says.

"About?" I say.

"The pictures of those people," she says,
"that you have there above your desk.
They all committed suicide."

"So?" I say.

"It worries me," she says.

She's right, of course, on Hart Crane,
Van Gogh, Hemingway, Suckling
& Harry Crosby,
but she chooses to ignore the fact
that both Pound & Henry Miller
died of old age.

Then she's gone
& so is the next line;
in fact, the whole goddamned poem
starts falling apart.

I tear out the sheet
& stomp downstairs waving my arms.

"What's the matter?" she asks.

"I lost it," I say.

"I'm sorry," she says.

"As for Hemingway," I say,
"one of his wives once left
a batch of his stories on a train
& he was never able to reconstruct them"

M. ROUSSEAU

"the guilt-ridden nerd," I said,
"who wrote down his confessions."

"Ah, that Rousseau," she said, leaning her painting
against the wall & folding the easel.

"Yes," I said, "& as one with a Catholic upbringing,
I think the world would have been better off
if he had gone to church & made his confessions
in secret to a priest.

"But that Rousseau was not brought up a Catholic,"
she said, putting my bottle of vodka
back in the cabinet.

"I know, I know," I said, "but he fucked up the French
with his goddamned writings."

"Oh, the French," she said, going out to the kitchen
to check the dinner.

"Yes, the French." I said, getting up
& taking my bottle of vodka out of the cabinet
to pour another unartistic,
but forgiving drink.

THE ENIGMA OF ARRIVAL

We sailed in
about dusk,
tied up the boat
& walked into town
to do some drinking:

the Florita was crowded
so we crossed
the plaza

& went into Pepi's,
bought a bottle of gin
& sat down at a table;

I lit a cigar
& we drank for a while
& talked about
words,
about the magical being
of words;

then Hemingway
took out his pad
& began writing
a story

& I diddled a poem,

but when I saw this magical being
dressed all in yellow

I thought: Fuck the words,
stuffed the poem in my pants
& took my drink to the bar
where she was sitting.

THE IMMORTALITY GAME

As I watch from the window
the light is just right
& there's a glow on her cheek
that's as rare as gold dust:
a young woman passing in the afternoon,
still too young to imagine
she will ever reach the garden of Allah;

later I open a book
of French impressionist painters
& see Manet's The Fifer,
dated 1866:
a young boy in a brass-buttoned tunic
& baggy red pants with a blue stripe
that curves into eternity;

by midnight the wine has run out
& I'm banging the typewriter
trying to get that young woman right;

neighbors across the street
can hear the clatter:

it's that goddamned poet
turning into the stretch again,
still playing the game.

— Richard M. West

Bainbridge Island WA

thank you for your company i said
you're welcum she said
as she disappeared into thunder
dresst in black and hwite

will i see you again?
maybe you will and maybe you won't
she said as she wiggled her hips
the asters opened on her birthday

and all the frogs rejoist
for the rain the night before
and the summer lightning

from the mountain to the sky
manifested our desire

HWITE-WATERING ON THE RIVER OF DEATH

if she had askt me i would hav told her
the Indian name for the New River.

if she had askt me i would hav told her
she had a big heart.

if she had askt me i would hav said to her
i seem to be very happy in your presence.

if she had askt me i would hav told her
i would ride with her on thunder road
behind her long mane of freedom.

— Robert Head

Lewisburg WV

pirates cry

Pirates cry when they come into port and see their loved ones. They unhook their peg legs with a gentleness one associates with nicer men. They may have been out there plundering and killing but the sight of their loved ones makes them shake all over. They don't care if dinner isn't ready or the beds aren't made. Look at those wives in lace caps, their arms crossed, knowing most of the money's been spent. Look at those boys, their compasses spinning in all the wrong directions. Pirates cry out of love, out of frustration, because the very thing they need so much is the thing that will drive them back to sea again.

peter morris

THE SONS OF FUNERAL DIRECTORS

Life has few laws, few absolutes, except for this: the sons of funeral directors almost always end up being funeral directors themselves. You almost never hear of a funeral director's son going into show business, or becoming an aerospace engineer. They're on a different path from you and me. Expose them to the arts, take them to cockfights, push them onstage with strippers, they won't change their minds. All they want is that degree in mortuary science so they can go home and take over the family business. Interestingly, the members of such families deny the reality of death among themselves. When you pass a funeral parlor with a sign out front that says "Cole and Sons," you can bet the father has died and that the sons are running the business.

NEAR A MISSLE BASE

I grew up near a missle base that wasn't very important to our nation's security. Other than a chain-link fence overgrown with honeysuckle vines, there was nothing to keep people from walking right in. Dogs slipped under all the time. My dog was always over there, sniffing around the jeeps. The military police would scoop him up and toss him back over like a little bale of hay. To them, he was more of a pain in the neck than a threat to security.

The only time things heated up was when they conducted one of their drills. Suddenly everyone started running around, parking the jeeps in different places while the underground rockets slowly rose up. They barely looked able to fly. Rusty green nose-cones. Incredibly long serial numbers on their sides. During these drills, which always seemed to take place in the late afternoon, all the dogs in the neighborhood would stand transfixed outside the fence, ignoring the far-off calls of their masters.

GIFTED PEOPLE

Not gifted at birth, I've spent my life searching for gifts, hoping for gifts, dropping hints about my birthday coming up. Without my yearly haul, I'd have none. I don't mind admitting I'm jealous of those who compose symphonies at age nine. And I'm not jealous of their talent. I'm envious because they get birthday and Christmas gifts on top of the ones they received at birth. It doesn't seem fair for gifted people to receive still more. But consider the downside. If you deprived them of all the toys and sweaters the rest of us get, they'd feel rejected and unloved, and that would ultimately affect their ability to use the gifts they were born with. They'd lapse into Chopsticks in the middle of a Chopin sonata, and for a confused second we wouldn't know if they'd gone mad or whether we were simply listening to a beautiful interpretation of something pedestrian and simple.

NOTHING VENTURED

I thought I'd be the only one to show up at the costume party without a costume, but a lot of other people had the same idea. It turned out to be a fairly boring party. Everyone was dressed in street clothes, except for two girls who showed up as two halves of a horse. Almost immediately the one in front noticed, through her eye-holes, that nobody else was wearing a costume, so she took the horse's head off and made her friend step out of the bottom. You could tell they were embarrassed. To ease their awkwardness, various people got into the horse's costume and pranced around in it. The other guests laughed. Things started to click. But the girls suddenly felt a little resentful. They couldn't get their costume back. They went up to the host and said they had a routine all worked out, and wanted to do it. They bent down to show him but it didn't come across very well because you could see how hard they had practiced.

BLUE FLAG, RED FLAG

A blue flag means the ice is hard enough to skate on. A red flag means it isn't. You don't really know how they go about deciding which flag to put up, since the ice almost always looks the same. Fifteen years ago, a boy died because someone was too lazy to take down the blue flag and put up the red one, but everybody's forgotten about that. New people have moved in. Of course, when one of their kids dies the newspapers will resurrect the story of the earlier tragedy. Upon further digging, they'll discover that the flag-man, in both cases, was one and the same. Universal outrage will grip the town. Not knowing what to do, the mayor will fire the man and forbid skating altogether. But the unbearable beauty of the lake will tempt people out onto it, night after night, until the need for flags becomes obvious once more. Unsure of how deep public sentiment really goes, the mayor will quietly rehire the same man, assuring one and all that close supervision will be the watchword from now on.

ANOTHER MAN'S MOCCASINS

Even if my son had a bedwetting problem, I don't think I could send him to one of those bedwetting camps, or to one of those combination bedwetting and overweight camps in Vermont, where the brochures show fat kids riding skinny white horses and huffing up nature trails. How desperate does a parent have to be to do that? And what if the treatment doesn't work? What if the kid comes back and still wets his bed, still weighs two hundred and fifty pounds? Do you send him to military school even though you know they'll try to beat it out of him? I've met parents who've gone through this sort of thing. Sometimes with more than one child! They need sympathy, so they blurt out their problems to anybody. Seeing your shocked expression, they hold up their hands to ward off your predictable protests. The funny thing is, when you hear them explain the actions they took in the context of the time, you realize you would have done the same thing. Say this out loud — "I would have done the same thing" — and they'll be your friends for life.

FUTURE NINJAS

The future ninjas of America wait for their mothers to pick them up after karate class. Unlike other groups of boys clustered in one place for any length of time, they don't fight. They don't even talk very much, having exhausted themselves with all those kicks and chops.

The first mother pulls up in a silver Saab. She moves something from the passenger seat to the back seat so her son can sit down. She knows not to kiss him in front of his friends.

Another mother beeps her horn as she brakes along the curb. She squints at the pack of them, not sure which boy is hers. They're all dressed in identical white karate outfits. She waits for awhile, then toots her horn again. One of the smaller boys walks over and gets in without looking at her.

Now the boys are reading comic books to pass the time. Today's comic books aren't very funny, so their expressions remain the same. They look at the pictures, then they read the words. Cars keep pulling up, one by one, until only a single boy is left, walking back and forth in front of the empty karate studio, not sure whether to kick the air or burst into tears.

LOW CEILINGS

Tall men shop in tall men's stores. At least that's the theory. Usually, their short, dumpy wives do the shopping for them. They try their best to reach the shelves, but they can't, because the shelves were designed for tall men, who don't shop. A seven foot salesman has to come over and provide assistance. "Just how tall is your husband?" he asks. "About a head taller than you," she replies. It's the sort of remark that makes him feel slightly ill at ease with himself and his choice of occupation.

BARE SPOTS

The tree is puffed out in the green splendid shock of being brought inside to die. Sap sticks to my hands as I straighten it. Uncle Zeke will be over soon to criticize the bare spots, and to tell us what kind of tree we should have bought. No tree is ever quite right. On the Fourth of July he sits on the porch criticizing our fireworks, saying we should have gotten such and such kind instead. Whatever kind of turkey we buy for Thanksgiving, it's no good. We should have consulted him before throwing our money away. Easter brings the same tedious jellybean postmortem: didn't we know about the sale at Food Fair, five pounds for \$2.00? I'd like to shoot Uncle Zeke. I've gone to the gun store more than once. But just when I'm ready to purchase the weapon of my choice, I wonder if I'm doing the right thing by him. Would he approve of this particular firearm, or would he prefer to be killed by some other weapon? I should just come right out and ask. He'd give me a straight answer without a moment's hesitation.

BRYLCREEM BLUES

No woman has ever run her fingers through my hair. They've done other things, but never that. For some reason, they only seem to do this for formerly bald men whose hair has miraculously grown back. They seem to have a thing against doing it for men who've always had hair.

I guess they view it as degrading or sexist, whereas in the case of formerly bald men, they don't mind because, after all, it's just an act of kindness, a nice way to reassure some insecure guy he's just as attractive as any other man.

Bald men look enviously at men like me, men with lots of hair, without realizing that they're the ones with the best chance of hitting the jackpot. Their touching ignorance of this fact is the very thing that attracts the soft, slender hands of beautiful women.

BEFORE AND AFTER

Before and after photographs don't tell what happens after "after" is over. Is she still a slender and attractive 115 pounds, or did some unexpected emotional crisis drive her back to the strawberry shortcake? Even as I write this, she could be making a pilgrimage to Elvis' grave, taking up two seats on the bus as she opens the Enquirer to the ad she posed for eight months ago. The "after" photograph shows her pulling out her waistband to signify all the fat that isn't there. She remembers being told to suck in her stomach and hold it for the flash.

Elvis' grave is only thirteen miles away. The rural southern scenery gives way to the quasi-cosmopolitan landscape of Memphis. She sees a basset hound baring its teeth and biting itself on the leg to get rid of some ticks. The driver stops outside a correctional facility to pick up some wives returning home after conjugal visits. They're barely able to board without assistance. Some of them start to cry as soon as they sit down. If it weren't for the diversion provided by their tabloids, if it weren't for a certain before and after photograph, the future would seem to hold out no hope at all.

THE FAST TRACK

According to my appointment book, I wouldn't have a single free moment until Thursday of the following week. Every page was crowded with names and times. Asterisks. Stars. The only opening was a tiny slot at 11:00 A.M. on December 17, where somebody had cancelled because of a death in the family. I stared at this empty white space in disbelief. It seemed to glow. Too impatient to wait for the day, I took a pencil and drew a tiny stick figure of myself in the space. Gave myself a pair of sunglasses and a tropical fruit drink. Put a fishing rod in my hand. It was heaven to see myself having a halfway decent time. Then, of course, the phone rang. It was somebody demanding to see me because of a major screw-up down at the printing plant. My mind raced. Was I to blame? All the old instincts returned, and I erased myself without thinking.

TEST PILOTS

When you think about it, a test pilot's job is fairly easy. All he has to do is flip the plane upside down a couple of times, mumble a few garbled "rogers" into his radio, then double back through the clouds to his favorite empty field. Ease it down. Spend a few hours with his girlfriend. Knock back a couple of six-packs. Reel in some rainbow trout. If his supervisors accuse him of not responding to their calls, he can simply say his radio went dead. It's his word against theirs.

"But our radar shows you landed fifty miles from here."

"Landed? I almost crashed!"

He reaches into his flight suit and lovingly fingers the packet of coke his girlfriend slipped him as they kissed goodbye. Test pilots! I sit at my desk, a stone's throw from my boss' desk. Making a personal phone call involves incredible risk. Sneaking a few minutes with the crossword can send me hurtling to the ground in a ball of fire.

ZERO MOTIVATION

An honest day's work. That's all my boss expects. But this place isn't conducive to work. There's coffee to drink, people to talk to, the morning's mood to absorb. Somebody's selling chances for a trip to Ireland. Somebody else comes in with a get-well card for a secretary who broke her hip over the weekend. In scribbling my best wishes, I feel pressured to match the wit of those who've already signed. Should I make a joking reference to the broken hip, or take the high road and be poignantly sincere? I stir my coffee and picture myself in the hospital under similar circumstances. Which would I prefer?

I don't want to come across as overly sentimental, because normally I don't give this person the time of day. As I'm pondering my options, the window washer drops into view. He's hanging from tight straps that yank his trousers up. He doesn't acknowledge my presence and I decide it's best not to acknowledge his. So much to do! With a careful tug he descends to the floor below, leaving only ropes and bright blue sky. The window looks so clean, it's as if he polished the sky, instead of the window. That's exactly the sort of thought that keeps me from getting anything done.

SNOW FORTS

Kids build snow forts without really knowing anything about ballistics or how to defend themselves against surprise attacks. The snowballs hit the sides of the forts and gradually wear them away until they cave in. Rather than stop the fight, they hurl their frosty missiles even harder, with no real protection except for the crumbled piles of snow at their feet. Noses are bloodied, cheeks start to puff. When the forts were still standing, there was a certain code of honor at work. Now it's getting ugly to watch.

MOTH BALLS

The moth balls in my grandmother's closet have smelled the same for forty years. There's nothing in the closet anymore. That's why the scent is so strong. I can't believe moths were ever a problem in here, or that they'd ever come back. By now every moth in the world must know about her moth balls. That's why the smart ones have tried to infiltrate the homes of younger people. Younger people don't buy moth balls. They don't keep their wardrobes longer than a few months. There's undoubtedly a moth ball association that meets twice a year to discuss the problem of moth balls, and how to sell more. I'd love to know their view on all this.

SPONGE BATHS

If minimums were less, I could complain more, but they're just enough, so I can't really say anything. For four days I've been getting sponge baths from a nurse who believes in saving water. Technically I'm clean, but I still feel dirty, even after she sponges under my arms. You have to do more than sponge. She refuses to press, to do more than dab at patches of old iodine. I feel pretty good overall, but they won't let me take my own bath because they're afraid I'll get dizzy and crack my head open on the side of the tub. Sue the hospital. She touches the pale blue sponge to my forehead and smiles as imperceptibly as a person can smile, and still have it qualify as a smile. The bare minimum. Sick or well, all my life, the bare minimum.

THE LETTER OF THE LAW

The Klan wants to hold a rally here, and I work for the department that issues the permits. I hate to say this, but I've never met a more polite group of people. They know the constitution by heart, and they quote all the parts they know I won't know. They seem fascinated by everything in my office, even the little machine that makes my cigarette smoke disappear. Their spokesman has a kind, soft voice, and he uses it to say some of the cruelist things I've ever heard. He points to the picture of my wife and children and says surely I'm interested in protecting them from big black apes and money-grubbing jews. I light a cigarette and switch off the little machine. It's beginning to bother me. They know exactly where to sign the permit when I hand it over. They have their own pens. Reagan's regulation portrait smiles on the wall behind me. A mandatory stars and stripes, tassel-tied, in the corner. These are the only visual clues they need to conclude their America is the same as mine.

A MARK ON THE WORLD

You could dust the world for fingerprints and not find many of mine. Almost none on blunt instruments or hand-guns, and not many on church pews either. I go around saying I want to leave a mark on the world, but maybe enough marks have been left on it already. Enough vaccines. Enough masterpieces. Maybe I don't want to leave another smudge on history's windshield.

Is there a clean surface anywhere that hasn't been blurred by thousands of other people's marks? Yesterday I rested my hand on the side of a skyscraper, and it felt like the skin of Frank Lloyd Wright, stinging me. No surprise there. Think of all the people who deface his buildings, or will, when they grow up anonymous, and can't deal with their anonymity any better than I can.

THE DECEIVING CLOAK OF ANDREW JACKSON

There were lots of counterfeit bills going around at the time. A rash of them being pumped out by real professionals. It was when I tried to pay for a meatloaf dinner at a Chuckwagon near the airport that I realized I was holding a bad twenty. The cashier had noticed something. She shook her head and pointed to the oval portrait of Andrew Jackson on back. "It's their idea of a clever little joke," she said. "In a real twenty, you only see one finger protruding from his cloak. The bad ones have two fingers protruding." The cops had told her. I stared at the bill. The exactness of the engraving process precluded a printing error. No, this was a deliberate attempt on the part of the counterfeiter to leave a personal stamp on his work, a sly little signature. Having no choice but to pay with a good bill, I now knew I had to get rid of the bad one somehow. The Gulf station across the street seemed the logical place, since it was run by halfwitted highschool kids who could barely count, much less examine currency with any sort of discrimination. Unloading it turned out to be child's play. The kid stuffed it in his shirt pocket without a glance. Nonetheless, as I drove away, I was tempted to go back and show him the two protruding fingers, even though it would have thrown him into confusion, and he would have been puzzled as to what to do.

LITTLE OLD LADIES

Safe for a minute, no passing in this zone,
Which suits me fine, not having the nerve
To go head to head against those scrap metal trucks
With death in their headlights, hell's high beams.
My headlights aren't that bright. My need
To get where I'm going isn't that great.
The man behind me wheels out, a blur of chrome
And spraying salt, infuriated, late
For a meeting with some maladjusted insurance adjusters.
Now the white stripe breaks into dashes
And everyone's pressured to make up for lost time.
One by one they whiz past, surprised
I'm not a little old lady. My young but cautious face.
I'm an insult to them. An insult to little old ladies.

THE DIRECT AND INDIRECT OBJECT

Drive-ins would be great if you didn't have to go there in your car. I like the blue neon and the fireflies, but I feel trapped by the doors and the pressure to have a sexual partner with me. There's a stigma attached to going there alone. And really concentrating on the movie.

Skiing's another source of frustration. Every time I take to the slopes I realize once again that skiing would be delightful if skis weren't involved. All my problems with skiing have been the direct result of the skis. Take them away, and you have one blissful experience! The pretty girls, the lodge....

No one loves geography more than I do, but the problems involved in keeping the Andes straight from the Azores make me want to wipe both places off the map of my admittedly limited intelligence. Just when I was starting to enjoy geography in school, my teacher ruined it all by making me memorize the exact location of all these cities, mountain ranges, and continents. She couldn't leave well enough alone.

And unfortunately it's no different with writing. I love writing even more than skiing or going to the drive-in, but there's no way to do it without putting words on paper. Reading over the things I've written is like watching a projector fail during a showing of "Downhill Racer." I'm the one who's tumbling through the snow. And I'm the one who's operating the projector.

DOOMED TO REPEAT IT

Up in that elm, a nest that's been empty for weeks. No other birds have moved in. There's a sensibility at work, a respect. Birds are considerate. Either that, or they're extremely picky about decor. But that can't be right, because they'll only end up building a nest exactly like this one. It's reminiscent of the hell you go through when learning to tie your shoes. Your mother hears the school bus outside, so she finishes for you. But you're determined to do it yourself, so you untie the perfect knots she's made and face the problem anew.

TOMORROW AND TOMORROW AND TOMORROW

What's in the tea leaves? Only news of a tea importer's strike. Nothing else about the future. They only focus on the immediate issue of tea. If you see something else in them, it's you putting it there. Probably from coffee-nerves.

Try a crystal ball. But only if you have a vested interest in crystal. Only if you collect crystal and want to know if your collection is worth as much as that slimy little man at the jewelry store told you it was.

Or swallow your skepticism and shell out the ten bucks for a boardwalk gypsy. Let her read your palm. But when she starts telling you about great fortune and tragedy coming your way, ask her to confine her comments to your palm.

Will it ever get caught in a meat grinder?

Will anyone put money in it, if you're forced to beg on the street?

HAWAIIAN SHIRTS

There's more to Hawaii than what you see on a Hawaiian shirt. Still, the riotous combination of blue and white seems to communicate the essence of Hawaii instantly. The confounding thing about it is that no recognizably "Hawaiian" scene or activity is pictured, yet you still feel the ocean breeze in your face, you still smell the fruity smoke of seaside clambakes. It's easy to forget that downtown Honolulu's clogged with just as many muffler shops and dingy social security offices as other cities. (Why even think about cafeteria workers in their hair-nets?) When native Hawaiians wear Hawaiian shirts, you can't help thinking it's because their real shirts are in the laundry.

MYSTERY GIRL

We hired a babysitter, a girl we didn't know very well, on the strength of her saying she wouldn't touch anything, eat anything, or have any of her friends over. "I have references from all over the neighborhood," she assured me. Her hair was a spiky strawberry blonde and she already knew how to use make-up so you barely saw it.

"I'll just do a little work on my term paper while I'm here," she said, going into the kitchen and spreading her books out on the table. My son bounced downstairs in his Spiderman pajamas. She smiled at him. "Nice pajamas!" Then she turned to us: "I hear it's a great movie. Don't feel you have to rush right back." Obviously, the whole thing seemed too good to be true.

As we drove to the theater, I pictured wild orgies, human sacrifices, kegs of beer exploding, windows breaking. The minute the movie was over, we raced out to the parking lot and jumped in the car. I gunned it all the way home, thinking the worst, then something worse than the worst.

But she was there on the porch to greet us, ruffling my son's hair and saying what a well-behaved little boy he was. When her father pulled up in front of the house, I paid her quickly and she left. For hours afterward, we checked drawers and closets, looking for teenage traces, some indication that she'd been in our midst. Nothing.

This was a girl who didn't eat anything, didn't touch anything, and didn't have any friends.

It was sad to think of her growing up and becoming a mother.

-- Peter Morris

Lansdale PA

NOT INCLINED

DIGITAL

Not reclined.

Touching moments
do not linger,
save in memory.

BRANDED NEW

Another
brand new
old brand.

PINNED

She was a
butterfly.

— Guy R. Cochrane

Hayward CA

THE VILLAGE COFFEE SHOP

Be good to your food.

— French's mustard

TOMORROW: MEAT LOAF the bulletin board declares.
The new linoleum is the color of head cheese;
I drop my spoon and the waitress says,
"You didn't need that anyway,"
then she yells to the cook,
"Tony, you're cookin' too fast.
They haven't had time to eat their salads."
I overhear parts of customers' conversations:
"That's how I'm getting uglier,"
"Tony, that toast you made me last Friday
was the best I ever had,"
"Toast, plain toast?"
One fellow mashes peas
into his mashed potato;
the waitress wears a t-shirt
from some fashionable cafe
in Santa Barbara.
A radio in the kitchen softly plays
"When You Wish Upon a Star."

The sidewalk buckling up — big trees.
Pretty Mexican boys lolling around
fire hydrants, in front of the Rexall Drug.
Royal Crown cola at the market, and free
comic books to read. Celery
and a certain pink found only in the aprons
of grandmothers.
Soft sculpture streetlamps — a red train running
through town every morning at seven,
a red banner proclaiming the grape festival
I never got to go to.
The red and white sign of Dairy Queen
on the highway
the taste of honeysuckle overgrown and ten feet high.
The pink of daylilies,
the reddish hair of a Shetland sheepdog,
boys in red shirts,
days too hot for red
the railroad tracks
green impossible trees, black walnuts
casketed in their husks
a walk into town
hand-packed ice cream
a lawn, a maidenhair fern, a porch
big enough for sitting,
roses, roses, and bounding into the yard
a wonderful big white dog
named Red.

— Denise Dumars

Hawthorne CA

STANDING IN THE KITCHEN EATING OUT
OF A BOX OF LEFTOVER CHINESE FOOD

at dinner with two friends i used
sticks

now i use
a fork

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

the nights are
long and the
days short, so i
am pretty much
forced into
going out and
buying a string
of tiny white
christmas lights
to hang around
the window and
along the wall.
every year at
this time i do
the same thing,
and it does a lot
to relieve the
pressures of
the winters here.
i know that a
single string
of lights doesn't
sound like much,
but it is.
i completely
depend on them.
these lights,
they remind me
of the festive
atmosphere of
an ocean liner.
that's one of
my goals in life:
to travel around
the world on
such a ship.
it may be my
only goal.
i lie in bed
listening to
the stereo
with every
light off
except these
christmas lights
strung in
mid-november
desperation.
i know it was
early to put

them up, and
i know it'll be
late when i take
them down.

SNOW
POEM

written
while
it was
coming
down

THESE COLD
MOUNTAINS

walking
around in
bare feet
in an
almost-dark
kitchen, when
suddenly i
feel something
cold under my
left foot, and
when i lean over
to see what
it is
i find
a dime.
and it is
cold, this
dime, very
cold.
i put it on
the stove.
i even
consider
putting the
stove on to
warm up
the dime.
but then
decide
against it.
needless to
say i have

no good
reason
to have a
warm dime
in my possession.

no one
ever told me
a warm dime
is worth more.
although maybe
in these
cold mountains
it is.

over the sink
onions hanging
sprouting

LIVING ALONE

there's a tomato sitting on the windowsill. it's been there now for over a week. a monstrous thing it is too. and it certainly is ready to be eaten, but i've just been without the patience necessary to make a salad. maybe i should simply take it and cut it up and eat it by itself say with a pinch of salt. the window that it's in looks out onto the motel grounds at the back of the motel. prominent in view is the huge weeping willow tree. when my father was here last week he sat in the chair by the window and he marveled at the size of the tree. he also noticed the tomato sitting there, and he asked me when i was going to eat it, since in his opinion it was as ripe as could be. the sun is shining on it now. shadows go across it. shadows of the weeping willow. it sits there calmly like the buddha. it looks like it has achieved all a tomato can possibly achieve, ever. but it does have to be eaten soon, yes. it's just that it's the last tomato of the season, the last local garden tomato. after this it's back to the tomatoes at the supermarket, and they are nowhere near the same quality. they haven't achieved true tomatohood. but if i am going to eat it tonight i think i'll have it plain, with some salt. an ambitious salad would only take way from the purity of the act. my god, such consideration. only because i live alone do i have the luxury of this consideration. or

should i say the madness. now if this tomato were at my mother's it would be part of an elaborate salad which would be followed by an equally elaborate meal. and i certainly do not have anything against that kind of eating. but living alone it's better to concentrate on the tomato by itself. this is more in keeping with the situation. so, for dinner i'll have this single monstrous tomato with a pinch of salt, and i'll eat it at the table along with three chairs empty and still.

100 LAPS

it's monday night and the football game is a lousy one so z goes out and starts his car and lets it run for awhile, since it is one of the first really cold nights of the year and he hates frosted windows. i offer him some wine when he comes in but flatly he refuses it, like i knew he would, knowing how little he drinks these days. so i drink alone as we watch a few more plays, and then finally i just turn the set off and we sit on the couch for awhile waiting. he has his old black overcoat on, which he's very proud of. it has an unusually high collar, which causes him to look like a vampire, especially too because he has long black hair these days, swept back. not that that is the style he wants, but his wife has been pestering him to have it that way. she says she misses the curls. z would prefer to have it short, like he does in the summertime, extremely short, so that when he washes it he doesn't have to fuss with it. this short style he calls his "convict cut." i prefer seeing his hair short also. i think he looks more intimidating with it short. you might ask me why i'm so concerned with z appearing intimidating, and i would have to say that i believe it's a must for an old broken-down poet like z. the same goes for me. at this stage of the game we can use all the protection we can get. we've written ourselves into such a tight-ass spot with poetry that in a society such as the one we live in we have become dangerously vulnerable. between the two of us there is not a single

credit card. so we sit and talk awhile, be-
moaning the early onslaught of winter weather.
z talks about his parents having just recently
moved to arizona, where they live in an expensive
old-age retirement community. he claims his
father now swims 100 laps a day in the pool there.
says his father is completely crazy about swimming
and because of this he is the picture of health.
somehow this seems to make z feel more secure
about his own well-being. i don't fully
understand the connection here between z
and his father, but i accept it, for his sake
and mine.

— Ronald Baatz

Woodstock NY

SUE'S PAST & MINE

I really enjoy it
when Sue talks about
her ex-husband
and lovers
rummaging through the past
going over it all
it's cosy
talking over a beer
in a pub
or lying together
in her bed smoking
and staring at the ceiling
or the romantic painting
of a Scottish loch
or Italian lake
in smokey blues and greens
on the wall beside the bed
we know the rough outline
of each other's pasts
almost as well as
we know our own
it's cosy and gentle
lying there
reminiscing
and though I've heard
most of the stories before
just as she's heard mine
there's always some new
twist or slant that adds
to the picture in my head
it's like an old fiction

continually re-told
from a different slant
or another perspective
none of it ever bores me
and though at times
there are small twinges
of jealousy

minor barbs
they only add spice
to our lovemaking.

MISSING BETS

of course it's always
the money you might have won
that galls like last week
for though I ended up
a hundred quid better off
I might have won much more

I fancied Lady-Ever-So-Sure
Fire Bay and North Briton
in the first
decided to bet on the last two
in my reverse-forecast
and Lady-Ever-So-Sure came in
with Fire Bay second

and in another race
in which there were thirty runners
and no clear-cut favourite
nor form
I did something I rarely do
chose two horses for their names
Nobody's Perfect and Game for a Laugh
and bet each for a one-pound win

outsiders they came in
first and second

I won 15 pounds
but had I bet them in a forecast
I'd have cleared a hundred
and so I walked home that day
'if onlys' running through my head
faster than any of the horses

— David Tipton

Bradford England

IN A COUPLE OF HOURS

He has a sign taped to a tree outside the apartment house: EVERYTHING GOES. I go in. I talk to him. "Florida," he says, "I am moving to Florida. Does it rain in Florida? I mean -- does it rain like here?" "Not like here," I tell him, "and, when it does rain, it is a warm rain." "Yeah," he says, "Florida, here I come." Then I notice this nude animal in a bird cage. "How about him? Is he for sale -- too?" "Sure he is. And he is cheap. Real CHEAP!" I tell him: "I never saw a bird without any feathers" "He pulled them all out," the man tells me, "he's lonely. Some birds do that -- you know." I look at the bird. It is 90 outside. The bird is violently shivering. And the cage is in direct sunlight. "Why is he shaking like that?" The man either did not hear me or he pretends not to have heard me. He keeps repeating the word FLORIDA as though it is some sort of religious chant. Then he tells me: he is leaving -- in a couple of hours.

SHOOT EM UP BANG BANG

When I was a boy they gave me a toy -- a toy gun. And they told me: go and shoot em up, BANG BANG!

When I got to the age of Grammar School my mother gave me a Bee-Bee gun. She said: go and shoot em up, BANG BANG (and my best friend lost an eye).

When I got to the age of High School my father gave me his rifle that had a high power scope on it. We killed animals who didn't even know we were shooting at them. And my father laughed and my father told me: go and shoot em up, BANG BANG.

When I got to the age of College I went into the Army and they gave me a machine gun and they told me: men/women/children/babies ... go and shoot em up, BANG BANG. And I did. And everyone laughed.

When I got home from the war, I was homeless, so I got a gun. And I shot the first person who happened to get close to me. Then -- I shot them all up, BANG BANG. And no one laughed.

-- Al Israel Rose
Portland OR

OTTO DIX: SOLDIER WITH PIPE, 1918

in the next war, pipes will be
forbidden the (non-commissioned) combatants,
all tobacco will be,
alcohol also,
all sex almost certainly,
as hazardous to one's health.

A MAN'S HOME IS HIS CASTLE IS

mortgaged twice,
collateral for an equity loan,
and jointly held, with right
of survivorship.

BLACK MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, ETC.

The day that he lost fifteen thousand
dollars in the market, he came through
the door to find his wife on his case
for forgetting to take out the trash.

WE ALL SLEEP WELL AT NIGHT

secure in the knowledge that roy scheider is
out there protecting us from evil,
foreign or domestic,
the conspirators and the lunatic who acts alone.
but in 52 — pickup
which i just watched on the cable,
roy was looking very pale and weary.

FOR THE TIME CAPSULE

if you wish to understand
this year in the history of the universe,
consider the fact that it is altogether likely
that more americans,
not excluding the intellectuals,
consider john lennon and yoko ono
great talents and great human beings,
than do ernest hemingway.

OUR MOTHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN

when i turn on the fourth quarter
of the lakers-celtics game
my four-year-old son
goes running to tattletale to his mother:

"mommy, he's turning on football again!
you didn't tell him he could, did you?"

— Gerald Locklin

Long Beach CA

A SAD POEM

I live in a middle-class neighborhood of an unpopular
city
but even here there have been murders a half a block
away
and I would like to write five novels before I leave.

my security system man is a weightlifter and he
walked about the house
checking it out and he noticed the bookcase:
"geez, ya got a lot of books!"
"I write,"
"you're a writer?"
"yeah"
"can I have one of your books?"
I pulled one down and autographed it for him.

he finished the housecheck and recommended various
measures.

I agreed, wrote him a check for the total amount.

the next day he phoned: "listen, I was up all night
reading that book. you've been there: all those
women, the booze ... you remind me of myself"

"thanks."

"what I like about your writing, it's easy to
understand. I'm going to show your book to all
the boys down at the office."

"o.k."

"listen, I saw those weights in your bedroom. do
you lift those weights?"

"no, they're mostly a decoration"

"you ought to work out"

"I know"

after he hung up I went in and took a pull at the weights (only 65 pounds), did ten overhead, ten gut pulls, ten arm lifts.

that was two months ago, I haven't lifted them since but

we haven't been robbed either.

just more books stolen from the bookcase (many originals I'll never be able to replace) by friends who come by to drink my wine and talk and laugh with me.

there's no security system to detect that type except my own

which has always known and which keeps failing for their sake

which is no way to conduct any type of business, even this one.

GOOD MORNING, HOW ARE YOU?

\$250,000 home, swimming pool, tennis court, sauna, 4 late model cars, a starlet wife; he was blond, young, broad-shouldered, great smile, great sense of humor.

he was an inventor, said his starlet wife.

but he always seemed to be home.

one afternoon

while he was playing tennis with his friends two plain clothes cops

walked up

handcuffed him

took him

off.

it was in the papers the next day: he was a hit man wanted for killing over one hundred men.

what bothered the neighbors most was not who would move in next

but

when

had he found time to do it?

— Charles Bukowski

San Pedro CA

SPECIAL NOTICES::::::::::::::::::::::::::::::

Seeking quality manuscripts: A.K.A. Magazine, P.O. Box 3100, Long Beach CA 90803 and Kindred Spirit, Route 2, Box 111, St John KS 67576. ¶ First releases of "The First American Poetry Disc" series edit. by Sander Zulauf are available in VHS, Beta and 3/4" videotape formats as well as in archival Laserdisc, each 50-53 min. original TV readings recorded between 1978-85. First two represent an intro to poetry and include Allen Ginsberg, Donald Hall, Lyn Lifshin, Ismael Reed, Wm. Stafford, James Wright et al. Vol. 3 is devoted to James Wright exclusively. \$100/vol., inquire: First American Poetry Disc, County College of Morris, Rte. 10 & Center Grove Rd., Randolph NJ 07869. ¶ In WR:104, we recommended BUK, a portfolio of color drawings of Bukowski by Andre Juillard publ. by Editions Gentiane, France. The firm went bankrupt but copies now available (\$60) fm. Impressions, 3 Rue du Marche, 95880 Enghien Les Bains, FRANCE or fm. Michael J. Sherick, P.O. Box 91915, Santa Barbara CA 93190. ¶ Vox Feminae: Woman As Creator And Created (edit. Kathryn Parry) \$5 fm. Genre, Dept. of Comparative Literature, Calif. State Univ., Long Beach, 1250 Bellflower Blvd., Long Beach CA 90840. ¶ Two Novels (The Last American Revolution/Confessions of a Dead Politician) by Robert Fox, \$9.95 fm. December Press, P.O. Box 302, Highland Park IL 60035; also produces Who's Who In U.S. Writers, Editors & Poets (\$88) and Letters to Mrs. Z by Kazimierz Brandys (transl. by M. Edelson) (\$9.95). ¶ Hungry Poets' Cookbook (edit. Glenda McManus; recipes and poems) \$12.95 fm. Applezaba Press, P.O. Box 4134, Long Beach CA 90804. ¶ No. 5 of important Art On The Line series is Art Is In Danger! (texts by George Grosz, John Heartfield & Wieland Herzfelde) \$4 and new Printwork series begins with brilliant The Enchanted City (Palle Nielsen) \$9.95 fm. Curbstone Press, 321 Jackson St., Willimantic CT 06226; also produces Claribel Alegria's Luisa In Reality-land (\$17.95), Margaret Randall's Memory Says Yes (\$7.95), Paul Laraque's Camourade (\$9.95), Jack Hirschman's the bottom line (\$9.95), Ron Ridenour's Yankee Sandinistas (interviews with North Americans working in Nicaragua) (\$9.95), Victor Montejo's Testimony: Death of a Guatemalan Village (\$8.95); write for complete catalog. ¶ Remember old-time radio's I Love A Mystery with Jack, Doc & Reggie as written by Carlton E. Morse? If so, you'll like his new novel with all the original characters: Stuff The Lady's Hatbox (\$16.95) fm. 7 Stones Press, Star Route 50, Woodside CA 94062. ¶ the sound of two lip disks clacking, a challenging anthology/magazine (\$5) fm. The Press Of The Third Mind, 932 West Oakdale, Chicago IL 60657. ¶ Steve Richmond's Stance has ceased publication.— one of the unique little magazines.

NEW CLASSICS::

Billy Collins' The Apple That Astonished Paris (\$12.95 cloth, \$8.95 paper) and John Clellon Holmes' Representative Men: The Biographical Essays (\$22.95 cloth, \$12.95 paper; best essay on Neurotica and its creators to date) fm. Univ. of Arkansas Press, Fayetteville AR 72701. ¶ Philip Whalen's The Elizabethan Phrase (sgnd. broadside) unpriced fm. Michael J. Sherick, P.O. Box 91915, Santa Barbara CA 93190. ¶ Fred Voss' Goodstone Aircraft Company, \$3 fm. P.O. Press, P.O. Box 2730, Long Beach CA 90801. ¶ Toad Comes To Cleveland (Gerald Locklin, Joyce Guion Shipley, Michael Salinger, Chris Franke, Mark Weber) \$3 fm. Zerx Press, 2681 Euclid Heights Blvd. (#3), Cleveland Heights OH 44106. ¶ Greg Boyd's Puppet Theatre, \$7 fm. Unicorn Press Inc., P.O. Box 3307, Greensboro NC 27402. ¶ Norbert Blei's Paint Me A Picture/Make Me A Poem \$5.95 fm. Spoon River Poetry Press, P.O. Box 1443, Peoria IL 61655 and his The Ghost Of Sandburg's Phizzog \$13.95 fm. Ellis Press, P.O. Box 1443, Peoria IL 61655. ¶

VERY HIGHLY RECOMMENDED::::::::::::::::::::::::::

Donald Schenker's Up Here \$4.95 fm. Ahsahta Press, Boise State Univ., 1910 University Dr., Boise ID 83725. ¶ Bill Lewis' Selected Poems: 1976-1983 \$4 fm. The Victoria Press, Victoria Centre For Adult Education, Darnley Rd., Gravesend, Kent, ENGLAND. ¶ Leslie Woolf Hedley's Watchman What Of The Night? \$7.95 fm. Embassy Hall Editions, 1630 University Ave. (#42), Berkeley CA 94703. ¶ Gerald Locklin's Return To Ronnie Scott's \$3 fm. Inkshed Voluntary Press, 387 Beverley Rd., Hull, North Humberside, HU5 1LS ENGLAND. ¶ Jim Cory's Macho Poet \$4 fm author, 2300 Pine St. (#12), Philadelphia PA 19103. ¶ M. Kettner's Polaroid Tavern \$1 fm. bomb shelter propaganda, P.O. Box 12268, Seattle WA 98102. ¶ Kirk Robertson's ar.ti.facts (\$7.50), Norbert Krapf's East Of New York City (\$4), William L. Fox's Time By Distance (\$6), Jo Harvey Allen's Cheek To Cheek (\$6) all fm. Duck Down Press, P.O. Box 1047, Fallon NV 89406. ¶ Dan Lenihan's Lava (Ruth and Ellis and Friends) \$2 fm. Incendiary Publications, 203 Leslie St., Lansing MI 48912. ¶ Mark Weber's 3 Ring Circus (\$2) and Night Before: Some Poems (\$3) fm. Zerx Press, 2681 Euclid Heights Blvd. (#3), Cleveland Heights OH 44104. ¶ Billy Childish's Monks Without God (\$4) and Companions In A Death Boat (\$4) fm. Hangman Books, 2 May Rd., Rochester, Kent, ME1 2HY ENGLAND; fm. same source: Bill Lewis' Communion (\$4). ¶ Steve Richmond's Demon Notebook (\$5.95) fm. Water Row Press, P.O. 438, Sudbury MA 01776 and his Santa Monica Poems (\$7 sgnd) fm. Sundog Press, 22058 Cumberland Dr., Northville MI 48167. ¶ Curtis Zahn's The Plight Of The Lesser Sawyer's Cricket (Plays, Prose & Poems) \$8.50 fm. Garland-Clarke, c/o Capra Press, P.O. Box 2068, Santa Barbara CA 93120.

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OUR EXCHANGE LIST::::::::::: :::::::::::::::::::::

Each committed reader, no matter what his/her taste, will find magazines of interest in this list. All deserve patronage. Many good mags have ceased since our last list, probably because of postal increases which seem geared to "stamp out" the individualistic "little" press community.

A.K.A. Magazine, P.O. Box 3100, Long Beach CA 90803 (\$8/yr.). J Amelia Magazine, 329 E St., Bakersfield CA 93304 (6.50/issue). J Art:Mag, 5055 East Charleston (F110), Las Vegas NV 89104 (\$2/issue). J Asylum, c/o Greg Boyd, P.O. Box 3307, Greensboro NC 27402 (\$10/yr.). J The Beloit Poetry Journal, Box 154, RFD #2, Ellsworth ME 04605 (\$8/yr.). J Bogg Magazine, 422 N. Cleveland St., Arlington VA 22201 (\$10/3 nos.). J Burning World, 203 Leslie St., Lansing MI 48912 (\$7.50/4 nos.). J Catalyst, McKettner Publications, P.O. Box 20518, Seattle WA 98102 (\$8/3 nos.). J Cincinnati Poetry Review, c/o Dallas Wiebe, Dept. English 069, Univ. Cincinnati, Cincinnati OH 45221 (\$9/4 nos.). J Conditioned Response, P.O. Box 3816, Ventura CA 93006 (\$2.50/issue). J Crawlspace, 908 West 5th St., Belvidere IL 61008 (free for 6 x 9" SASE). J December, P.O. Box 302, Highland Park IL 60035 (\$12.50/4 nos.). J Dog River Review, 5976 Billings Rd., Parkdale OR 97041 (\$6/2 nos.). J Epoch, 251 Goldwin Smith Hall, Cornell Univ., Ithaca NY 14853-0199 (\$9.50/yr.). J Galley Sail Review, 1630 University Ave. (#42), Berkeley CA 94703 (\$3/issue). J Gargoyle, c/o Paycock Press, P.O. Box 30906, Bethesda MD 20814 (\$12/2 nos.). J Ghost Dance, c/o Hugh Fox, Univ. College, Dept. American Thought & Language, Michigan State Univ., East Lansing MI 48823. J Ginmill, 528 East State St. (#3), Baton Rouge LA 70802 (unpriced). J Gypsy, Virgin' Press, Box 283, HHB 2/3 ADA, APO NY 09110 (\$14/yr.). J Hanging Loose, 231 Wyckoff St., Brooklyn NY 11217 (\$9/3 nos.). J Hiram Poetry Review, P.O. Box 162, Hiram OH 44234 (\$4/2 nos.). J Hippo, Chautauqua Press, 28834 Boniface Dr., Malibu CA 90265. J Invisible City, Red Hill Press, P.O. Box 2853, San Francisco CA 94126 (variable prices). J Journal of Modern Literature, 921 Anderson Hall, Temple Univ., Philadelphia PA 19122 (\$16/3 nos.). J Latuca, P.O. Box 621, Suffern NY 10901 (\$10/3 nos.). J The Long Story, 11 Kingston St., North Andover MA 01845 (\$4/yr.). J Magazine, c/o Chris Mitchell, 6 Athole Gardens, Glasgow, G12 9AY SCOTLAND (\$1/issue). J Maryland Poetry Review, Drawer H, Cantonsville MD 21228 (\$12/yr.). J Minotaur Magazine, c/o Jim Gove, P.O. Box 4094, Burlingame CA 94011-4094. J Nightmares of Reason, no working address (\$5/3 nos.). J No Press, no working address (\$2/issue). J Open Letter, 104 Lyndhurst Ave., Toronto M5R 2Z7 CANADA (\$4/3 nos.). J

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