

in the old Massillon cemetery with a hard granite tombstone  
over his head. He'd gone away, just like me.  
Told me that the ones who didn't like to roam stayed home,  
meaning the folks back in the old country  
who still live on the land they've lived on for generations.  
Technically the State now owns the land.  
But centuries into the future if there be any people  
the roots of our family tree will still be buried deep  
or land at all  
in that soil  
and the tree will be sprouting new buds.  
Maybe by then the State will have withered away.  
I went back to the old country once to visit the relatives.  
I saw their mud-plaster homes and grape arbors.  
I drank their good peasant wine and their good peasant food.  
One of my cousins had married a soldier.  
He goosestepped over for the introductions,  
then stood there at attention, icy formal,  
all straight up in his uniform, hat and medals,  
proud scowl on his thin lips and blinkless eyes.  
I smiled at him in my blue jeans and tennis shoes and  
said "Howdy!"

The goodbyes were harder:  
hugging all my aunts,  
big buxom Bulgarian women I could hardly get my arms around.  
When I shook my uncle's hand  
I could feel just how calloused and proletarian it was,  
how bourgeois mine was in comparison.  
So this is what grandpa left. He'd told me all about  
fighting in the Balkans, deserting the army, stow-  
awayng across the oceans, crossing the Peace  
Bridge, hoboin from town to jobless town  
until he finally ended up here, me looking on  
with places of my own to go to  
before my own chair is empty.

— Richard Evanoff

Tokyo, Japan

#### WHEN THE IRS COMES KNOCKING

— for Scott Preston

i'm not sure they'll believe me  
when i tell them  
that, in this day and age  
of upward mobility,  
i have lived on an income  
of less than 6,000 a year  
for the last 5 years.

and lived quite comfortably too.

i have this paranoia  
of them tearing my book shelves apart  
carting off box loads of manuscripts  
falsifying my records ....

i have this thought  
that, in their eyes,  
a taxpayer is suspect if:  
either too prosperous or  
not prosperous enough. that it should be  
against the law to earn less than  
middle-class taxable incomes.

#### RATTLESNAKES AND GUITARS

this Mexican man showed me  
when i was a dozen years old  
the rattlesnake rattles  
he kept in his guitar  
for good luck. he shook the guitar  
for effect as he played.

i've found it a good place  
to store all my spare picks,  
i just dump 'em in there  
and the guitar rattles, and  
when i need another, i just turn her  
upsidedown and empty one out.

#### HOW DO YOU SAY

on the car radio  
the disk jockey just made  
the perennial mispronunciation of  
Illinois Jacquet's name, making  
it sound French with: Já-Kày.  
which is how we all said it  
until i met Illinois' trumpet-playing  
brother Russell and he jumped  
out of his skin, "It's Jacket! Jacket!"  
which led me to believe  
he's been trying to straighten  
this problem out  
all his life.

#### A NEW LID

Willie Nelson does this changing hat bit  
where in concert  
the audience throws up various type hats