

defiantly
and talking back
to the foreman whenever the foreman told him to do anything,
until finally the foreman one day
standing atop the big inch-thick slab of steel
bolted to the table of Lincoln's milling machine
suddenly began shouting at the top of his lungs,
"You cocksucker Lincoln! You you cocksucker you don't do
a Goddamned thing I tell you you cocksucker you son of
a bitch. Every day I have to listen to you bitch and you
never do a thing, I say you COCKSUCKER Lincoln EVERY day I
have to hear you bitch you cocksucker YOU COCKSUCKER
LINCOLN — "
on and on for 5 minutes
at the top of his lungs.

And 10 minutes later
Mitch went over to Lincoln
and asked him how it felt
and Lincoln shrugged coolly and said,
"He was just blowing off steam."

WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH

Whenever some machinists cutter blows up or rips into a
part
screaming and tearing the part off the machine table
and bringing the machine spindle spinning at 1000 or so
r.p.m.
to a slamming halt that sounds like a gunshot,
machinists all across the shop
let out with loud
wolf whistles of admiration
and screaming hoots of crazed delight
like a rodeo rider makes as the bronco he rides
breaks out of the gate,
and loud sustained applause,
leaving their machines
and slowly approaching the disaster in a closing circle
like fans
seeking out the star of a show,
as the machinist who had the accident trembles and stares
blinking
with shock at the jagged stub of a cutter
and the ruined part and torn-up tooling,
doing his absolute best
to keep that smile
he has forced across his face.