

SO WHAT DO YOU SAY NEXT?

my mother-in-law is about eighty  
and has some hearing problems.  
when i call her today, however,  
she not only sounds very lively and upbeat,  
but i'm not having to repeat a thing.  
i don't know whether it's a new hearing aid  
or what, but i say,  
"your hearing seems a lot better, nana."

naturally, she replies, "what?"

I BOW TO THE ALL-TIME CHAMP

i come home from renewing my driver's license  
and i crow, "i did it! i passed  
my eye test one more time without my glasses!"

"did you memorize," she says, "the chart again?"

"yeah, although my mnemonic powers aren't  
exactly what they were in high school.  
but the clerk gave me a chance to let  
my eyes adjust without my glasses on,  
and by really squinting i could bring enough  
letters into blurry focus to supplement  
the ones that i remembered. except i really  
couldn't see at all with my right eye alone,  
and i figured that the game was over,  
but i rattled off a few at random and  
she said i wasn't perfect but that you're  
allowed to miss a couple."

"i hate to tell you," my wife says,  
"but my father went you one better.  
he passed, as you did,  
even with his left eye covered,  
but in his case, as you'll remember,  
his right eye was a glass one."

"NO PAIN/NO GAIN"

you heard it a lot as a young man  
in weight-lifting rooms.

sometimes it was posted on the walls,  
along with other slogans such as  
"never give less than one hundred ten percent."

now i have pain everywhere,  
in my neck, shoulders, elbows, upper back,  
lower back, knees, ankles, and toes,

and if you want to add a joke  
about pains in the ass, why yes,  
i'm convinced that training at the bench press  
contributed to some nasty episodes  
of hemorrhoids.

what i mainly gained was weight.

that's the danger of trusting  
in people who think all poems rhyme,  
and that all rhymes embody truth.

#### UNEXPECTED HONESTY IN HIGH PLACES

although in so many ways i have been  
so much less of an academic than  
i should have been, i have excelled in  
one respect: i am the absolute paradigm  
of the absent-minded professor.

so just the other day, rushing to deposit  
a couple of checks at the atm, i  
automatically pulled up next to the corner  
mailbox and dropped the checks into it.

when i got to the bank  
i couldn't figure out  
why the checks weren't in my hand.  
i scoured the parking lot  
and virtually dismantled the car  
and retraced my steps from  
the car back to the house which i examined  
with the closest thing i could find to  
the proverbially fine-toothed comb.

later in the day the sad truth finally dawned:  
now i was horrified not only at the possible loss  
of the checks, but at the thought of  
my signatures and so much personal information  
floating around the oft-abused corridors  
of the postal service. so i not only stopped  
payment on the checks but called dozens  
of officials of the bank and the u.s. mail.  
no one could do much of anything except reassure me  
and restrain themselves from telling me that i was  
a blithering idiot.