

MARVIN MALONE
(WHO KNEW A POEM WHEN HE SAW ONE)

what he had:

business sense. a sense of responsibility. pride without ego-sickness. both sides of the brain. the empiricism of the scientist. the rage of the just. virility. sticktoitiveness. willpower. self-confidence (no need for committees). the courage to say no. the courage to say yes to what he knew would outrage. a tolerance of artistic vanity, self-doubt, bravado, bad faith, addiction, delusion, mendacity. a willingness to listen, to forgive and forget, to afford second chances. the capacity to keep confidences confidential. wisdom to impart to others, though who can ever claim it for himself?

a good game plan that he did not abandon.

a love of what he was doing.
the belief that what he was doing was worthwhile.

what he gave:

a port in the literary storm.
a forum for the poetry of the people.
an armor against elitism.
a community.
permission, validation, reinforcement, all those good things that
the educational psychologists belatedly find names for.
sometimes instruction.
often a renewal of strength, of determination.
the possibility of permanence, that our words might be preserved.
hope.

what he left us:

the opportunity and obligation to stand on our own two feet.
the hunch (which would appall him) that somehow he still
knows what we're up to.

when he comes to mind:

often, but most commonly when i'm typing up my poems for submission and i smile, "here's one that he would have liked," and frown, "i wonder if there's anyone else out there who will." and then, as he would want, i put it in the mail.

—Gerald Locklin
Long Beach, CA

BITTEN BY THE WORM

I finally got my own
center section in Wormwood.
Marvin Malone died
before it could happen.

This would've been
the first time
anyone had published
a collection of my stuff.

A few more months
and I might have been
the featured poet
in the last regular issue.

I complained to Marvin
about the matter
in a dream
shortly after his death.

He smiled and said,
If this grievance
was one of your poems
you would throw it away.

—Daryl Rogers
Lexington, KY