



**boink!**

**Blurbs  
TOC  
Business**

**Richard Martin**

# BOINK

by Richard Martin

a Lavender Ink  
electronic edition.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Some of these stories and poems have appeared in the following publications. Thanks to editors of:

Magazines: *ACM*, *Bellingham Review*, *Café Review*, *Collages & Bricolages*, *Colorado North Review*, *Estuaires*, *Expressway*, *Fell Swoop*, *Lungfull*, *MSS*, *Pulpsmith*, and *Yellow Silk*.

Chapbooks: *Backwoods BroadSides*, and *Napkin Apologies (Fell Swoop)*

Books: *Modulations*, *Marks* (Asylum Arts), *White Man Appears on Southern California Beach* (Bottom Fish Press), *Quack* (Lot M Press), *Dream of Long Headdresses: Poems from a Thousand Hospitals* (Signpost Press).

Anthologies: *American Poets Say Goodbye to the 20th Century*, and *Aloud: Voices from the Nuyorican Poets Café*.


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## DAY ONE

The opening line of this **memoir** which starts: “The opening line of this memoir” does not contain the main idea of the memoir and/or my reason for writing it. In fact, the opening line - the one just read if you happen to be reading this - has no meaning, seems pretty flat for the start of a memoir, and is generally useless to me because I have in mind a great opening line that I really intended to use, but have not used because I felt I needed to wait until I turned fifty years old to use it. I won't be fifty for a couple of more weeks, but my urge to write and begin the memoir started today.

Today's date: February 26, 1999.

The urge to write my memoir came over me after I shoveled my walk, read Richard Brautigan's *Trout Fishing In America*, drank a glass of orange juice, heated my sore back with a heating pad, told my wife about a strange “poetry-like video” dream I had during the night, checked and double-checked to see that the schools were closed, stopped by Hercules Press to pick up some free copying my friend Mike, who owns the place, did for me, paid my bills and mailed them out at the Post Office by lucking-out on a space for my car in front of the P.O.(which involved shifting my car into neutral, turning on the caution lights, and walking briskly into the post office lobby to send my bills down the throat of the *stamped mail only* slot). Of course, this sequence of events is out of

order and is only minorly intended to foreshadow how out of sequence my account of my life will appear in memoir form.

Let me state from the start that I have never read anyone's memoir and don't tote high expectations around in my head that many people will read this one. Basically, what I know about memoirs comes from reading side and bottom page advertisements about them in publications like the *New York Times Book Review* section. Over the years, I've noticed a lot of celebrities write memoirs. The advertisements for these memoirs usually indicate that they've had (the celebrities, that is) and that they reveal (the celebrities, that is) rough and abusive childhoods as well as assorted addictions to overcome, and that they (the celebrities, that is) have shown great courage in weaving these experiences into the tales about the great movies and glorious awards they have made (the celebrities, that is) along the way. And there are other memoirs depicted in these side and bottom page advertisements by famous generals etc., who have bombed the hell out of various third-world countries and recount in their fabulous-stark-raving-mad memoirs the full details of their various bombing campaigns, juxtaposed with their own woesome childhoods and addictions to those who missed the daily reports of these bombings on the evening news.

It amazes me sometimes that I can pick-up stuff like this from advertisements I barely glance at. So, there is something more to it than that. I must

confess that the *corner-of-my-eye* is fully functional as I saunter through the corporate bookstores of America looking for something to read. It's obvious to me that an awful lot of high-profile people on TV use these bookstores and the corporate publishers to extend and push their life-stories.

Luckily, I don't consider myself a hypocrite or even a **cynic** for thinking my life-story could feel comfy in one of these bookstores next to a starlet's sighs or a general's ramblings. True, I'm just a very low-profile individual. But I have a story to tell and why the hell not tell it. Give it up for *Joe Average...The Common Guy...The Guy on the Street...At the bar...In the Laundromat... Etc., Etc. This one's for you*. Besides and/or in spite of my obscure status, I'm a life-story (form) of high intention and will (let's say money-back guarantee) charm my lot of readers with my method of disclosing my life.

Here's what I promise to produce, reveal, and recycle: chunks of a novel destined for the ashcan (in the novel, I am a character called Fist, who wanders aimlessly (after outrageous religious indoctrination in early childhood) in the social and personal upheavals dominating his experience of the second half of the 20th Century), new tales in stand-up and/or radio disguise about my life with doctors (including a poem never before published called *Background Radiation*), an occasional flash fiction (under two pages in length to sell, reinforce, or make a point about said upheavals), and assorted

wry comments about American life, my life, your life, and life in general, as I work through the self-imposed limits I've placed on this memoir in terms of time.

Here's the deal: in order to celebrate turning fifty years old and dumping this memoir off my chest (buried treasure, real treasure?) before the start of the next millennium (understanding fully that my small stash of readers will be well into the new millennium before my memoir gets into their hands, and that they will have experienced the full monty of **Y2K** or understood it to be a hoax etc.), I will capture the essence (or existence, if you believe existence precedes essence) of my life up until this point in writing in 50 days, with a single day of actually writing the memoir corresponding to one year (non-sequential) in the package of fifty years I've lived. This is not to say I will write about each year. Like, here I am as I was when I was three, and the family remains perplexed about my penchant for running into things - walls, floors, toilet seats - with my head, and the memoir documents all that as year three. No, what I mean here is that I won't take more than 50 writing days to present the fifty years of my life to you.

There are a few reasons for imposing such a limit. One: Who will want to read any memoir (let alone this one) whose domain is the events of the last fifty years of Century XX from the scenic vistas of the next millennium? Sure, there will be some who will say: "Yeah, I'd be willing to read another goddamn memoir situated in Century XX, as long

as the bastard who wrote it was still in the 20th when it was written. If not, count me out, baby, 'cause it's time to be moving on." Two: My own investment in my life story warrants no more than 50 days. It's not that I don't value my life and find it as unique and interesting as anyone else's - still there's a limit to what I can say or want to share. Plus, if I go on too much (I write in long hand), I'll never type something that took me longer than 50 days to write. And at the moment, I can't say whether it will be written in fifty consecutive days or just fifty days with the reader cued by the date or something like 50 sections, with each section representing one of those 50 days. In terms of design and structure, the memoir remains open at this point.

Let me just end Day One by noting a nor'easter is howling through Boston today. The weather people are leaping out of the TV at me screaming with glee to expect 12" - 22" of snow to land on the city as the storm sweeps northwest across us from the Atlantic. I'm not a native of Boston, but I work in its public schools. I got to Boston because my girlfriend, now second wife, moved here and took-up Mutual Fund accounting and encouraged me to come along for the **ride**.

**1. memoir.** All kinds of reversals happen in life. There are big spiritual notions of reversal such as the first shall be last and the last shall be first. I know that Dylan (See **Note 106**) references this Sermon on the Mount message in one of his songs. And though I can't recall the poem, I remember one by Jerome Rothenberg (See **Note 21**) that describes and/or maybe imitates the practice (in a poem) of a particular Native American tribe that did everything backwards on a specific day each year. Closer to home, the **Red Sox** shortstop Nomar Garciaparra's first name is actually his Dad's name in reverse. Of course when one moves to physical space, all things high and low can be referred to the **theory of relativity**.

Reversals are part of our experience and also affect my memoir. Because, although these opening comments in the Notes Section of my memoir appear to occupy the space of note number one, they were actually the very last comments written. In fact, I actually wrote this first note long after the memoir was finished and in response to feedback that I received on it from a number of friends. Believing in solid feedback from others (writers and friends), I've incorporated as much of the feedback received into the memoir when I agreed with it and found it feasible and possible to do so without tampering with the overall design of the piece. For example, X.J. Dailey (See **Note 129**), editor-for-life of *Fell Swoop* magazine, thought I went a bit overboard near the end of the

manuscript with imported/collage material and requested more daily narratives to achieve balance across the whole text. Under the fifty day mandate of completion, I had tired near the end and was pasting in “stuff” that I thought referenced my life, but with a few days left before hitting the magic 50, I toughened up, took his advice, and added a few more narrative pieces.

Two other friends (Peter Kidd [See **Note 33**] and Peter Laska [See **Note 13**]) challenged me in a positive manner about whether or not I had actually written a memoir. Peter Laska suggested that I had written more of journal with memoiristic footnotes. Though he liked the work, he asked me to consider moving the notes to center stage because they contained the actual memoir, while the journal-like days dealt more with the process of writing and thinking about language. He argued for a reversal of the notes with the days and/or a complete elimination of notes and days and to put everything together in a *Naked Lunch*-like format. It was interesting advice, but I was not up for that amount of structural overhaul. Don't get me wrong here, I had my own doubts about whether this “text” was a memoir from the start. In fact, I was convinced (for awhile) that it was an antimemoir and even had referred to it as this (in parenthesis) in my query letters to perspective wish-list publishers. Of course, the antigenre notion brought to mind the great Chilean poet, Nicanor Parra, who coined the term **antipoetry** and defined what that meant in the poems he

wrote. Yes, I thought, I am antimemoirist. Hadn't I spontaneously shied away from a direct approach of accessing my life via writing temporally ordered and/or arranged text involving momentous experiences and subsequent memories of those experiences conveyed in words? Though (as I hope you'll see) I have lived an interesting life, certainly, I wasn't the first person and/or had even made it to the North Pole or the top of Mount Everest. I hadn't been the first guy either to walk on the moon – hell, I didn't even know where I was on the day Armstrong imprinted his lunar oxfords into the moon's craggy face. Most likely I was horny though and in some Binghamton, New York, bar talkin' trash about the present state of affairs.

No, my *memoir*? was/is (antiheroic?) about starting with the quotidian, the moment, the passing thought or event being experienced and getting that down on paper with the associative hope and belief that a person's momentary (in the present) meandering could/would conjure and reveal the past events that bring a life into its own significance. In that sense, the Days function like non-Freudian Rorschach designs, capable of rendering my life and experiences to the reader as I ponder the pattern (individual words in bold text) within a day and allow their attractive force to surface memories from the mind's closets, and whatever I had stuffed into my writing desk that composed my life up until now.

Having said all this, I could live with the memoir being called a *journaloir*. It's a cool enough



word as hybrids go, and I'll admit that I've even toyed with the idea of making up some historical precedent for *journal* writing. My initial inkling was to tie it to some obscure French writer who moved into this form of writing after developing a deep fascination with Flaubert's *Emma Bovary* and/or to link it to an equally obscure Russian writer who got hooked on Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground* (See **Note 97**) and started sending Fyodor random notes on the quality and make-up of his own life in Czarist Russia. But seeing I didn't feign too much in my memoir, this seemed like a little too much bullshit even for me. But it took some time to quell the fantasy because I saw that one of these *journal*s could eventually make it to America and be lost for years in the attic of a Vermont farmhouse. It would be only a matter of time before it was discovered by a writer from NYC who quit college teaching to write about urban intrigues and hassles in the woods of Vermont. Failing to cash in on the pristine environment of Vermont to capture the life story of Martha and Ray (too highly emotional and unstable investment bankers on Wall Street), our "rural" writer would eventually hock one of these *journal*s (whichever one made the crossing) on eBay as actually having been written by Flaubert or Dostoevsky for beaucoup bucks.

Look, **BOINK** is a memoir. However, for those of you who prefer to call it an antimemoir or *journal*, in place of memoir or any other *genre-smashing label* (mailing or otherwise) capable of

being slapped or stuck on a text, have my blessing, as well as my deep appreciation and gratitude for reading it.

2. **cynic**. I wasn't much of a philosophy student back in the late sixties and early seventies when I studied **Plato**, Aristotle, Kant, Hume, Hegel, Sartre, and **Heidegger**. But I do remember the strange jokes and anecdotes my philosophy professors used to tell to make their lectures a little more interesting. This is why I put the word cynic in bold type. You see when Plato and his henchmen were attempting to come up with a definition of man, like: Man is a rational animal or some such thing, someone was always able to **deconstruct** the proposed definition or find some fault with it. They eventually (according to my Plato instructor - a wizened and chubby little guy with sparkling eyes) came up with this definition: Man is a featherless **biped**. It seems they barely got over patting themselves on the back about their new definition when a cynic (one from the school of Cynicism) threw a plucked chicken over one of the walls of Plato's Academy.

3. **Y2K**. This computer snafu has been in the news a lot lately. (I understand that the computer lights would've either stayed on or gone off prior to this memoir seeing the light of day.) Not being a computer buff, I do know it has to do with the difficulty the computer will have reading the numerals 00 at the start of the next century. According to some, the computers will shut down,

leading to widespread Chaos in the realm of humanity. People are feverishly working on it. Recently, a store that caters to the non-electrical household interests of the Amish complained they were selling out all the Amish stuff to Y2K survivalist freaks, and that the Amish were perplexed and pissed off.

**4. ride.** In the Fall, 1988 (Vol. 7 No. 2) issue of *Sagetrieb*, there's a piece on Robert Creeley that discusses Creeley's notion of getting into a car and hitting the open road and the process of writing a poem, "open road" being the key concept. According to Mr. Creeley, we're not going to the store for some bread and milk when writing a poem. In fact, where we're headed is not important or known. It's the road. It's traveling down it. Letting it unfold. Being in the process of it etc. etc. When I was still a kid I took off for California after my mom asked me to go to the Little Venice Restaurant for a quart of tomato sauce for supper. The Little Venice is located in my hometown of Binghamton, New York. I was heading down the road. Process. Process. Just like this memoir. A guy by the name of Leverett T. Smith, Jr. authored the piece: Robert Creeley: "A So-Called Larger View."

**5. Red Sox.** I used to be a Yankee fan – even had my picture taken with Ellie Howard and Bob Turly when I was a little kid. Biggest Yankee moment: seeing Maris and Mantle hit back-to-back homeruns. What the hell happened to me? Go Sox.

**6. theory of relativity.** Two kinds: special and general – don't know much about either. However, I have a better image-handle on general relativity because I can imagine the sun as a bowling ball on a flat rubber sheet and the indentation it would make etc. From there I can see the planets as ball bearings making their own indentations on the sheet and catch a glimpse of the orbits formed through all the bending and subsequent curves the various massive objects make, i.e. the warp(s) in the spacetime continuum. See poem.

#### NEXT SOUND

If you listen to them the sun  
moon down steps into water you might recall  
the husky voice a grey evening's wrong number  
this talk between stars and a mother's complaint  
when she catches you burning  
like a match in biblical darkness It is

arrangement of sound that makes the street  
look like a swarm of newspaper buses beep  
the men on the stoops with their staring tattoos  
the woman who asks for fifty cents  
will ask again twinkling with history the mind  
knows what's phony and takes a breath  
o this anger at metaphors and speed  
the sloppy sluice of synapse juice good morning  
afterall chips of clouds begin to fall

I'm tired of themes nickels tossed into the air

heads/tails you go first/you come last  
that's the way it is in the House of Cliché  
I'm pounding on the drums of what I hear  
listening for something else my ear bends  
like space around planets for the next sound  
I'm rolling down an incline of future  
to meet you sweet syllable my hammock swings

(from *Modulations*, p. 112)

7. **query letters.** See Appendix A

8. **antipoetry.** See Nicanor Parra, *Antipoems: New and Selected* from *New Directions* (NDP603). On page 66/67 there is a poem called "Test" which defines an antipoet and antipoetry. From the introduction, Frank MacShane writes of Parra: "His antipoetry was an open challenge to those who believed poetry should be rhetorical, obscure, and dignified."

9. **Heidegger.** I took a sixteen week course on Heidegger *back in the day*. The class read *Being and Time* and it took the full sixteen weeks to get through the first 160 pages of the text. During the entire course, an actual German shepherd sat next to me. It wasn't mine and it breathed so heavily I had a hard time hearing the professor. Wherever I moved to get away from the dog brought no relief because the dog had it in its mind to stay right next to me. I was then, and remain now, mildly afraid of dogs and felt considerable angst and dread during the course. When I wrote my paper on the

existential structure of death according to Heidegger, I received a C+ for my effort. Imagine getting a C+ for writing about death. I blame the dog. A few years later, I met the professor of the course in a doctor's office. When I asked him what was wrong, he smiled facetiously, and said he was dying.

10. **Plato.** Note 2 contains an error message. Thanks to Peter **Laska's** close reading of draft-BOINK, I now understand that the "plucked chicken" routine would have had to involve Aristotle and the Lyceum, not Plato and his Academy because "Man is a rational animal" is an example of Aristotelian species-genus type definition. The only thing that I got right in Note 2 was that I wasn't much of a philosophy student.

11. **deconstruct.** From Webster: Interestingly enough in the New College Edition of *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, published by Houghton Mifflin Co.(1969, 1970, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1976, 1978), the word "deconstruct" doesn't appear. There's decompression sickness, decontaminate, decontrol, decor etc., and a sexy shot of Marilyn Monroe on page 343, where deconstruct would be if it had made it into this edition. Marilyn leans forward in the picture with her chest and has her head slightly tilted back, with her right arm divided nearly into a 90 degree angle and raised so her right hand rests behind her head. She has on a sleeveless (though a

black and white photo looks to be) gold gown of some sort with plunging neckline. The word décolletage is beneath her picture and above, the words, “Actress Marilyn Monroe.” She looks great even with the ghostly white aura surrounding her photo. By the way, when I used “deconstruct” in reference to Plato’s definition of man, I was sort of referring to the word and concept: deconstruction.

**12. biped.** The word appears in my poem, “Footnote Of Sky,” which highlights Plato’s (actually Aristotle’s) supposed definition. See Verse 2, line 3.

**13. Laska’s.** To see a real philosopher in action check out Peter Laska’s “Revisioning the Millennium: Counter-Ideological Reflections on Modernity, Anthropology and Utopia” in *Left Curve* no. 24. (PO Box 427, Oakland, CA 94604-0472.

E-mail: [leftcurv@wco.com](mailto:leftcurv@wco.com).

Web-site: <http://ncal.verio.com/~leftcurv>.

**14. Marilyn Monroe.** See poem.

#### REFERENCE ON REQUEST

It seems nutty. I wanted  
each phrase to bend like  
a river. We were in Algiers  
behind a large rock  
with a guy from NYC  
obsessing M. Monroe.  
The shift was on:

early myths of prophets  
and devils  
wrestling for souls -  
the world slipping  
on banana peels  
of history:  
pages of text without sky  
clouds and other  
natural paraphernalia.

We wept as a hurricane  
of narrative  
ripped through our image  
of city: people everywhere  
in magnificent cafes  
clutched automatic pencils  
as napkins  
(scored with wise sayings)  
swirled off.

(to appear in *Lungfull*, Fall 2000)

**15. décolletage.** Still with Marilyn. A low neckline. From the French: décolleté. A beautiful word - beautiful woman. Uphead: a poem with a low neckline. (See p. 40)

**16. deconstruction.**

I. As Philosophy

II. As Criticism

“A philosophy of lang. which investigates the

unreliable mediation of lang. to access any object taken to exist independently of lang. D. also refers to a kind of literary crit. or reading of lit. identified with practices of the Yale School, whose members were Paul de Man, Geoffrey Hartman, and J. Hillis Miller.”

from *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. Edited by Alex Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan.

**17. Footnote Of Sky.** I wrote this poem when I lived in the Roslindale section of Boston. My wife and I were living on the top floor of a triple-decker. I added the beatnik words in parentheses after reading Norman Mailer’s essay “The White Negro” in Ann Charters’ *Beat Reader*. Mailer claims in the essay the beats like the following words: man, go, put down, beat, cool, swing, with it, crazy, dig, flip, creep, hip, square (p. 599). I guess “daddio” came out of my head.

#### FOOTNOTE OF SKY

The trees are red white and blue  
The flag of sky smells of pine  
I’m a hopeless cat (daddio)  
with a bird on my head  
whistling apocalyptic tunes

Plato hated poets  
and their damn perceptions  
Man is a featherless biped (dig)

Physicists are short on matter  
for their equations

O elegant chairs of pure form (go)  
Last night I was in the cave  
and the end-light  
was more like a patch of blue sky  
than fiery intellect

I was free and the sky  
is what I thought about (hip)  
Say the time it would take to shoehorn  
into my skull just to be there  
doing sky-like things of immense being

Then what would Plato say (square)  
when the moon rises  
in a clown’s orange collar  
and my wife says she’s too tired  
to sit on the porch and stare

But I can if I want (swing)  
or come inside for chamomile tea  
so wherever I go in the darkness  
I’ll feel calm and know her body blazes  
like any star shooting through my head

**18. dig.** No way Aristotle gets into this poem.

## APPENDIX A

April 29, 2000

W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.  
500 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY 10110

Dear Sir or Madam:

BOINK is a memoir (an antimemoir) of an American poet, father, husband, teacher, friend, critic, and human guinea pig. Unlike many memoirs on the shelves today, BOINK disdains an Aristotelian approach to memory and storytelling. Though not bohemian, BOINK employs free association and utilizes multiple genres to examine my case history. It offers readers personal narratives, poetry, short stories, parts of an unfinished novel (*The Mound*), interviews, rejection slips, found textual items, standup comedy, and nom de plumes to work with as they journey into my life and times. BOINK is also interactive and allows readers to communicate directly with me via email, as long as they complete a few things that I ask them to do during the course of the journey.

BOINK is funny. Its form is original and challenging as it pursues insights, ideas, memories, spontaneous impressions, and feelings. BOINK is unmedicated. BOINK is hot. BOINK is yours.

I've enclosed chapters one and fourteen, biographical highlights, and comments from writers about my last book. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Richard Martin

## DAY TWO

I'm one day closer to the "great line" I should have started this memoir with. And inside my head there is a mess of rules about sentences and words and one of them is about the inadvisability of ending a sentence with the preposition *with*, let alone starting one with the conjunction, *and*. Am I mistaken?

**Rules** bug me. Lots of things bug me (we'll get to those). Close to "ug." Irritable. Annoyed. Bug is a great word. *Bug* as in how many of them are there now: 20 billion (Rules?). Understand that the opening line of Day Two of this memoir (just written) bugs me because the "great line" — a line my readers are entitled to — remains unavailable to me in the not-too-distant future. The hell with *with* and *and*. Even after absorbing (in book review form) a language theory that claims that the language spinning out of our mouths and pens results from two parallel tracks in the mind, with one track for looking up words in memory and the other track for applying rules to the words, I still say rules bug me. Which reminds me (referring to this particular theory of language formation), I used to belong to a Word Club in sixth grade called, *You Never Guess, You Look It Up*. The club was started by a female music teacher who had an enormous passion for words and for kids sitting up straight in their seats. She required us to keep our butts pushed through the backs of our chairs whether we were looking up the meaning of *adagio*

or getting the most from our vocal cords singing: ...goodness how delicious eating goober peas. Here's a Proto-Indo-European linguistic fossil for you. Did you know *sing/sang/sung* is irregular in form because 5000 years ago the folks in Central Asia relied on vowel shifts to cue them to different tenses?

Despite my fixation on what I think should be the first line of this memoir and now rules, etc., I felt yesterday was a good writing day and that the memoir got off to an ass-kicking start. Though I promised my wife not to share with her any of the work on my memoir until it is completed, my excitement about yesterday's work made me want to share a few things with her. After I told her about the Notes, and how possibly my life and interests would emerge through them, she said that she thought this little innovation would ensure a limited readership of the memoir. She just frowned and rolled her eyes when I reminded her that my friend, **The Genius of Noise**, once said after playing a wicked sax in a downtown club in Rochester, New York, that he hated the audience. My wife is into the classics of world literature, starting with William Shakespeare (if you're a Stratfordian) or Elizabethan poet Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford (if you're an Oxfordian), and she's probably right about the "Notes." But I'm committed to hitting the open and unknown road of my life. Process. Process. The very fact that I'm into my second day in a row of working on my memoir makes the task of sharing my life with

even a few, even more appealing to me than the first day.

But I'll admit I'm a little worried about the Notes. I think they could really take over the memoir and that causes a vague consternation to rattle inside of me. For example, yesterday, I mentioned I lived in a **triple-decker** and I neglected to place triple-decker in bold type. I didn't have to put the words, *triple-decker*, in bold type. There's no subtle law or formula I'm operating under that cues me to which words and phrases I choose to display in bold type. But I think I should have put *triple-decker* in bold type because the words, *triple-decker*, are rich in meaning for me and would have activated a note or two that might deepen or add to the quality of this memoir, even with my vague consternation about the "Notes" noted.

An additional problem with all of this has to do with the fact that I believe I wrote the words *triple-decker* yesterday, but I'm not totally sure. I know I'm on shaky ground here. But because I'm struggling with notions of continuity and discontinuity as I approach a study and/or reflection on my life, I didn't actually reread yesterday's work to pick up the thread of continuity or at least to discover if I mentioned the words *triple-decker* or not. I do acknowledge a quick scan of yesterday's work, but in my opinion the rapidity of that perusal precludes categorizing the activity as a rereading of the text.

What I do know is this. It snowed like hell yesterday because the nor'easter stalled over

Boston. I like this kind of change. A good storm I mean and it didn't take much to convince myself I had done enough writing and deserved a couple of pints of **Guinness** at the corner pub for my efforts. Tossing pen into empty coffee cup, I left my desk, found boots and hopeless mittens, and entered the white madness.

Snow, deep snow especially, seems to make everyone a bit more friendly and yesterday was no exception. People that I normally pass during snow-less pub jaunts usually say very little to me and most of the time barely acknowledge my presence. But with all this snow coming down and all the shoveling, a plethora of *hellos* and comments about the weather, and how we're in the world, after all, and isn't that a grand mystery, greeted my tromping presence. It was like everyone suddenly realized they were truly alive and that the world snows sometimes and has a sky and a destiny and a pulse that comes to them through a beautiful space-time continuum. And I felt that with any one of these neighbor-strangers, whose smiles were so sudden and outright friendly to me, I could possibly just "hang" with them for a minute past *bello*, and maybe discuss Absolute Mind or Maya or Nirvana with them, as snowflakes piled up, on, and around us in a near perfect white-out wilderness.

Or maybe, we could just join in with the neighborhood kids in making snowballs to heave at trees or passing cars. Then lapse with frozen fingers into discussions about our own childhoods



and dreams, and how “things” in America at century’s end seem so stiff and phony after all our big accomplishments and tragedies. O to scream: Zoom Zoom Zoom and know it’s not enough.

So with these thoughts in my wet head and resting on my favorite barstool, I whispered the words “**flower power**” at my Guinness before initialing FP in its creamy head. **Brautigan** of all people (writers) had entered a random sequence of things that kicked off the urge to write my memoir in the first place.

**19. Rules.** A friend calls me the Rule Man because I wouldn’t let him pee off the dock into the lake at my wife’s family cottage in the Berkshires. It’s a tiny lake, more of a pond than anything else, and the cottage sits at the south end of it. It’s been in the “family” since the Depression when my wife’s grandparents bought it. My friend became incensed when I told him that he couldn’t throw his cigar butts into the lake either. When he comes over to our apartment in the city, he flicks his cigarette butts off our third-story porch to the street below. It doesn’t bother him when they bounce off stray cats or pedestrians. Just like my dad, he’s from the old school of flicking butts on the street and drinking until the sun rises. Pops started smoking when he was four years old and was up to four packs a day by his early teens. Whoever heard of secondary smoke back in the Fifties? Puff. Puff. Puff. Dad provided a real smoke-bath and would certainly pee in a lake. I have one foot in the old school.

I’m on record about rules. But I was under considerable pressure at the pond. My better qualities had yet to surface in the minds of my wife’s relatives. They were workers. Hard workers. Skilled workers. Busy bees. When they went to the lake, they sawed and hammered new docks and new additions to the cottage. They painted. Mowed the lawn. Planted flower gardens. Fixed the plumbing. When I went to the lake, I enjoyed watching these activities from far out on the lake,

by myself, floating in a floating chair with a can of Bud and a cigar. I had things on my mind like my lack of health insurance, my place in American letters, and the extra large condoms my wife thought I should wear. I couldn't wear these things and she knew it. They were out of my *jimmy* hat league. I was a slacker. It appeared on my resume. Things man, on my mind. All kinds of things. So to say I was slightly concerned about my first visit to the lake with a friend and no family around is a weenie understatement. When I told my friend, after a few drinks, how I was able to wear an extra large condom as a toboggan hat, we both had to pee in the lake. See poem.

#### RULES

1. The rules in my head play ping pong with the giraffe in the elevator.
2. I tell my girlfriend not to buy me shorts with defeated politicians on them.
3. We will stand up and applaud.
4. It is time to go home.
5. The artist who paints by number reminds the hat check girl of the jobs posted on walls in the Linguistics Department.
6. You've been told many things.

7. Today she jumps up and down on the rug.

8. The butcher in my neighborhood wants to sell his meat slicer for \$15.

9. Tonight they will lower a child into a word and witness the depth of illusion on color monitors inside the van.

**20. triple-decker.** There are tons of triple-deckers in Boston. Triple-deckers are three family apartment buildings that are reasonably spacious inside. When I first moved to Boston, my girlfriend and I rented the third floor of a triple-decker in a section of Boston called **Roslindale**. Our triple-decker was located on a side street just off Washington Street - a major thoroughfare in Boston - and behind a local plumbing business. Except for a beautiful American elm that grew up and over the left side of the building and the convenience to the bakeries and specialty shops in Rozzie Square, the location sucked. Too much noise from buses, packs of loud and caged dogs, disgruntled teenagers, pigeon flybys, and the neighbor across the street who leaned on the horn in his car up to 45 minutes each time some idiot parked his car in the handicapped space in front of his house. The horn blower would not be denied his urban music even though he himself was not the disabled person in the household.

Of course the plumbing business had its own

spin on the “muzak racket of all ownership” and started their day at 6:00 A.M. with an overture of smashing porcelain toilets with sledgehammers while a fleet of red trucks stood idling and sending their fumes *fluting* through our bedroom window. Cymbals were simple. At periodic intervals one of the plumbers heaved a used water heater into a metal garbage bin. Wake-up sleepy-head...

I wish I could say those of us living in the triple-decker were all part of one big happy family but that would be stretching the truth. For awhile, (maybe about six years) my wife and I had pleasant relationships with the couple on the second floor, and an older woman who occupied the first floor apartment. But as the neighborhood started to change, becoming more transient and impoverished, it wasn't long before our neighbors on the floors below us followed the trend and moved out.

So it is with cities. Boundary lines change. When we first moved into Roslindale, those who understood boundary lines asked if we lived above or below the square. When we said we lived just above it, they nodded their approval and said we were in a pretty good neighborhood. Except for the persistent urban noise, we liked the mix of Irish, Greek, Italian, and African-America neighbors. There was also a Middle Eastern presence in the neighborhood and some great bakeries and food associated with that culture. Everyone got along just fine. It was possible on any given day to walk out of our apartment, stop by the Italian Butcher Shop for the best meat, move on to the Greek

grocery for fish and produce, hit anyone of a number of bakeries for traditional sweets and/or Italian or pita bread, and walk past the Chinese Restaurant on the corner of Washington and Corinth and notice the portraits of the Ayotolla Khomeini on the walls of a social club above the restaurant.

But things change. A Haitian couple moved into the first floor apartment and kept the windows of their apartment shut (without air-conditioning) even in the most searing summer heat. In addition, they forgot to take notice of a chicken left in their oven for months. Roaches came out in full force and leased our apartment too. Once the pesky critters demonstrated their facility with setting off the bedroom alarm clock and my wife slumped toward depression, I knew it was time to move.

The landlord, sensing our frustration and valuing us as tenants, tried to dissuade us from moving by putting us up in a **Ramada Inn** while he dealt with the problem. Living at the Ramada was a trying situation. I was attending **Radio School** at the time (trying to solve a mid-life crisis and teaching funk) and my wife was full of her own career situations and aspirations in the Mutual Fund business. For some reason, we often failed to communicate (or as she would claim - fail to communicate at a speed I deemed appropriate and sufficient to the ambiance) while eating at Spaghetti Freddy's next to the Ramada and this bugged me. It wasn't a fun time.

21. **Guinness.** A few years ago, Guinness ran a

contest to win a pub in **Ireland** for a description of a perfect pint in 50 words or less. I wrote one and really thought I might win. I didn't. Here's my entry:

### THE PERFECT PINT

With a thirst deep as the Irish Sea,  
I reached for the pint of Guinness  
on the beer drain. "Don't you be  
touchin' the Guinness," the barmaid said.  
"It's workin' its magic— done when  
I say." *Magic*, I wrote in the creamy  
brown head. Then sipped on the soul  
of Ireland.

22. **flower power.** All ideas, concepts, and movements flow into Madison Avenue. Volkswagen hawks their new and improved beetles with references to flower power.

23. **Brautigan.** Because I'm running out of time on this day, I can't explain my thoughts about him at this time. Look for something more on him up ahead.

24. **Roslindale.** See Appendix B.

25. **American Elm.** *Ulmus Americana*. Elms can reach 100 feet in the air, though full size trees are becoming quite rare. Dutch elm disease is fungus spread by elm bark beetles. The disease has ravaged/is ravaging the Elm population. See poem.

### LISTING OUR DEMANDS

1. For starters there's the outrageous number of flowers we require to carry on meaningful conversations in the street.
2. There will be no more pathetic fences around our trees or trees respectful of concrete sidewalks and telephone lines.
3. No more working on trees period.
4. No more orange cones and cops on their days off to watch and guard the trimming process.
5. We demand the immediate return in the next hundred years of trees that create small earthquakes in our walks of trees that grow and howl their full height into our lives. Then we will make real lemonade and return to the art of climbing trees and equipping them with our telescopes

in the small observatories  
we make in them.  
Go ahead call them  
tree forts -  
we will be in them -  
young and old - reclaiming  
our skies.

Which leads us to #6:

**TURN OFF THE LIGHTS!**

Believe us;  
a magnificent diamond sky  
will reduce crime  
and our fears -  
save ENERGY  
and return us to our Common Soul.  
We need to look up.  
We have the right to see  
trillions of stars.

**26. the muzak racket of all ownership.** From  
Olson's Maximus poems. Fan of his and polis guy.  
See poem.

### POLIS

I arrive at place and  
place is name the sergeant  
of dawn arrives with his cat  
and plucks the sun  
into position the wizardry  
of gods and goddesses sparkle  
in the grass tick tock  
harm's way blows in the wind

Under suspicion of mind I  
turn the faucet of belief  
into red birds and oranges  
Drip drip coffee  
flows up a stairway of cups  
Image hides then ducks  
into its shadow the police  
cuff the wrong wrists  
Horns sound while new  
transmissions trip the laughter  
of TVs On the coach  
by noon I lick the afternoon  
like a commemorative stamp

**27. Ramada Inn.** See Appendix C.

**28. Radio School.** See Appendix D.

## APPENDIX B

**Ironically, the first major influx of new residents occurred in 1887, when droves traveled to Roslindale to investigate the first major train disaster in American history at the Bussey Bridge, over South Street near the Arboretum.**

# Welcome to ROSLINDALE

by Mark Widershien

by Mark Widershien

I have lived in the Roslindale community for nearly three years. Born in Boston, growing up in Dorchester, my world was Franklin Field, Franklin Park, the Blue Hills, Mattapan. Somehow, Roslindale was just a name to me, a faceless patch of real estate that bordered West Roxbury, parts of the Arnold Arboretum, and Jamaica Plain. As an adult, I was drawn here because of large apartments, lower living costs, the scenery, and accessibility to Boston. I had little idea that there was a hidden Roslindale, something that you cannot grasp until you live here.

The town that was christened Roslindale because a citizen named John Pierce discovered a town in Scotland called Roslyn, whose poetic scenery reminded him of his home with its rolling hills. Heretofore, the area had been known simply as "South Street Crossing," where the trains passed through on South Street. In 1870 the new name was submitted to the postal authorities by the residents, because the community had grown so large as to require a post office. Henceforth we became Roslindale, by all accounts the only one in the world.

While Roslindale could hardly be said to be noted for its architecture, a number of interesting buildings dot the area, many of them churches built in the 19th century. Perhaps the most impressive is the Roslindale Congregational Church on Cummins Highway, built in 1896 and designed by James Murray. This shingle-style building with its imposing clock tower can be viewed from all over town. Across Cummins Highway, at the corner of Florence Street, is the Roslindale Baptist Church, dating to 1889. Perhaps the most interesting building is the former Masonic Lodge on Belgrade Avenue, a tall red-brick triangular structure recently renovated by the noted Boston Symphony flutist, Fenwick Smith. Part of the main floor is the site of the new coffeehouse the Melting Pot, fast becoming a center for artists and musicians. Melting Pot owner Jeff Saliba hosts monthly exhibitions of art (currently showing the quilts of Heather Carito and Jane Southwick), and schedules regular performances of jazz and folk music, with poetry readings slated for the first of the new year. A popular draw is the jazz brunch on Sunday mornings from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. "The art work is gaining attention, and helps to promote business," says Saliba. When asked what he would like to see happen with the Melting Pot, Saliba wryly answered that he wanted his establishment to be the "Grand Central Station" of Roslindale, located as it is directly across from the Commuter Rail train station. Roslindale recently lost its other arts and music mecca with the closing of Guilty Pleasures Coffeehouse, open only six months on Washington Street. The loss will be especially felt as we enter the winter months and long for an indoor place to gather and enjoy cultural pursuits.

**When asked what he would like to see happen with the Melting Pot, Saliba wryly answered that he wanted his establishment to be the "Grand Central Station" of Roslindale, located as it is**

the Greater Roslindale Arts Association, which will next exhibit work from its weekly drawing group.

The Greater Roslindale Arts Association (GRAA) was founded in March of 1995 by Mary McCusker and Helen Hummel, publisher of the *Jamaica Plain Arts News* and also a Roslindale resident. According to McCusker, the group was founded as a way to meet people with common interests, to update the image of Roslindale in terms of the arts, and just to see what would happen. All three goals have born fruit as the group has



**(Re)painting the truck in preparation for the Roslindale Parade.**

sponsored a truck painted with scenes of Roslindale in the annual parade, organized coffeehouses at the School of Modern Languages, saw the first art opening in Roslindale (at Citizens Bank), and holds an annual "Day in the Life of Roslindale," when visual artists gather to capture scenes of the neighborhood. The group has shown at Boston City Hall for two years and has sponsored many other shows around the neighborhood. It has offered

became Roslindale, by all accounts the only one in the world.

Now that I have settled into this community, I am impressed by its hidden qualities and impressive potential -- perhaps the very factors that are attracting more people to Roslindale in recent years, many of them artists and musicians.

Originally the western part of a separate town called Roxbury, the area was settled in 1630, only three weeks after Boston itself. The Dedham Post Road (now Centre Street) saw many luminaries, including Miantonime, King of the Narragansetts, in 1626 and later Nathan Hale, Benedict Arnold and George Washington. By 1804 Washington Street was built, running as far as Rhode Island. It passed the Taft Tavern in the heart of the neighborhood, located where Adams Park is now. The area was annexed to the city of Boston in 1873, and Roslindale became a separate community.

**Noted impressionist painter John J. Enneking of Hyde Park advocated the preservation of "the natural beauty of Hyde Park and Roslindale," and captured the same in his work.**

Ironically, the first major influx of new residents occurred in 1887, when droves traveled to Roslindale to investigate the first major train disaster in American history at the Bussey Bridge, over what is now South Street near the Arboretum. Of the 23 killed and 115 injured, 50 percent were Roslindale commuters on the way to work in Boston. People were drawn to the scene, looked around, and stayed, attracted by Roslindale's long valleys and low hills, slanted roofs of cottages, ponds, and the variegated trees and vegetation spread out into a Monet-like canvas. Roslindale retains these country-town charms to some degree, particularly in the Arboretum, long a haven for artists, poets and writers -- a large portion of which is in Roslindale.

The Roslindale Historical Society possesses impressive photographs of nature as it once existed here. Noted impressionist painter John J. Enneking of Hyde Park advocated the preservation of "the natural beauty of Hyde Park and Roslindale," and captured the same in his work.

### **establishment to be the "Grand Central Station" of Roslindale, located as it is directly across from the Commuter Rail train station**

Like Saliba, businesses new and old are beginning to see the value of incorporating the arts into their establishments. Citizens Bank, just off the square, has regular exhibits, as does Fornax Bakery (currently showing work of Victoria Desagun), Innovative Moves Realtors (showing the neighborhood-inspired drawings and paintings of resident Mary McCusker), and the Roslindale Public Library. George Yiotis at Citizens Bank says of the exhibits, "Everybody looks at the artwork and it adds color to our branch. People come in just to see it. People who were raised here find it interesting to see [the work of] people they are familiar with. They feel tied to the community." The bank sponsors artist openings, after hours, with refreshments. The most recent show featured quilts from the Bates School. Exhibits are coordinated by

neighborhood. The group has shown at Boston City Hall for two years and has sponsored many other shows around the neighborhood. It has offered classes for adults and children, sponsors a writing group, gathers weekly for a drawing group, and publishes a regular newsletter. The *Parkway Artists Directory: your guide to local talent*, compiled by Janice Williams and Mary McCusker, was published last year with a grant from the Boston Cultural Council. It lists more than 70 artists of all kinds from Roslindale and surrounding areas. The next regular GRAA meeting will be held on Sunday, October 18 from 3-5 at the Roslindale House, 110 Poplar Street. For more information about the group contact Mary McCusker at P.O. Box 54, Roslindale, MA 02131 or call 327-0960. The group is open to all.

Roslindale is home to a number of arts opportunities. Roslindale Community Centers, at the corner of Cummins Highway and Washington Street, offers arts and cooking classes for kids, and adult art classes in the mornings. Soon music



**The Greater Roslindale Arts Association at a recent afternoon pot-luck . Left to right standing: Karl Haakonsen, Al Wallstrom, Kim, Rich, Anne McCambridge, Mary McCusker, Barry Silverman and Helen Hummel. Seated: Anne Khanbegian, Lydia Fondacaro. Behind and to the left is "the truck."**

**[Greater Roslindale Arts Association] was founded as a way to meet people with common interests, to update the image of Roslindale in terms of the arts, and just to see what would happen.**

classes will be included and the center is recruiting staff and students for future classes. Interested people should contact Patty Kennedy at 635-5185. The School of Classical Ballet, with its base at the Roslindale House, features both classical methodology and elements of modern dance. Co-founder Patricia Adelman feels that it is vital to "expose children to quality ballet that you can't get everywhere." The school can be reached at 491-8609.

A resource to artists and arts-interested of all kinds is Books and More, a used bookstore run by Brian Frawley at 63 Poplar Street (behind the library). Frawley has an extensive offering of poetry (including first editions), art and music books, literature and more. Open Saturdays and Mondays or by appointment. The shop is definitely worth a visit.

Thursday evenings in the summer months, Adams Park in the middle of Roslindale Square (named for Irving W. Adams, the first Massachusetts boy killed in World War I, and a Roslindale citizen) comes alive with musical events. Long-time resident mezzo soprano D'Anna Fortunato, who attends these events with hundreds of others, says, "Roslindale acts as a germinating force for the future of the arts. It might become a cultural hub if people get tired of going downtown for concerts and exhibits."

In some ways, Roslindale is already a cultural hub. According to *Roslindale: Boston 200 Neighborhood History Series*, written by Katie Kenneally, "The original Yankee village of Roslindale has become over the course of its development an unusually well-mixed community,

beginning with the Irish immigration, followed by Italians and other European groups, and later by Eastern Mediterranean and Arabic nationalities. Surprisingly enough, few problems have resulted from this ethnic mix. The community has derived a remarkable joy from its cultural diversity." At the Sacred Heart parish alone there are 2,000 families representing 30 different cultures. This richness provides both a source and a reason for cultural activities. According to Helen Hummel, "The arts can create a bridge between people of different cultures by revealing the heart of what a culture has to offer. Because of this, the arts are unique in their

**At the Sacred Heart parish alone there are 2,000 families representing 30 different cultures. This richness provides both a source and a reason for cultural activities.**

community-building power, bringing people together in positive ways for positive ends."

As more and more artists are drawn to Roslindale for its affordable and quality housing, its small-town feeling, open spaces, and cultural diversity, Roslindale can only benefit. Lesia Stanchak, who recently opened the new women's clothing and accessories store Zia across from the Melting Pot, noted that most of the people who came into her store on opening day identified themselves as artists.

As quoted in the GRAA newsletter of September 1996, "In a world where stress and violence dominate our lives, art is a wonderful way to communicate with others and a way to peacefully express oneself. What better opportunity can we give ourselves and our children than an activity that makes us feel good and helps us to gain self-confidence." Welcome to Roslindale.

--with Helen Hummel. Sources include *Images of America, Roslindale*, by Anthony Mitchell Sammarco, and *Roslindale: Boston 200 Neighborhood History Series*





## APPENDIX C

### LENNY AND SARAH AS SENTENCES

Lenny lobbed a chunk of medium-rare prime rib au jus over Sarah's head in the parking lot of the Ramada Inn.

Sarah claimed Lenny threw the piece of beef at her in the parking lot of the Ramada Inn and it nearly took her hat off - a blue felt hat with a tiny orange feather - as it cruised by her head.

Lenny says that he tossed the medium-rare prime rib au jus so it would clear her head by an adequate number of inches and establish the fact that he remained upset over the fact she had barely touched her food or talked to him during their entire dinner rendezvous at Spaghetti Freddy's.

Lenny says he knows the difference between lobbed-tossed and throw-to-hit-someone-namely-his-wife.

He's a former athlete and outstanding dart player, though he understands darts and beef require different grips, and if he was into repeating and/or revising sentences, he might enter the word *softball* into the semantic equation to account for his ability to lob natural objects over the heads of people that bug him.

Sarah says that a meal at Spaghetti Freddy's ain't exactly a rendezvous.

She says for her a rendezvous hints at something romantic and secretive.

There's nothing romantic or secretive about Spaghetti Freddy's; it just happens to share the

same parking-lot-suburban sprawl polis as the Ramada Inn.

Lenny and Sarah are staying at the Ramada Inn because there are very many roaches in their apartment.

They live on the third floor of what is called a Triple-Decker.

Someone on the first floor left a chicken in his/her/their oven for months and had the audacity to seal up the apartment during the summer months - shades closed/windows down.

Ralph, from Ralph's The Bug Man, told Lenny after running out of the first floor apartment that there were more roaches in that downstairs apartment than he has ever seen.

"Cite a number," Lenny told Ralph.

Ralph told Lenny in the neighborhood of a couple hundred thousand.

"No way!" Lenny said.

"No way!" Sarah said.

"Way!" said Ralph, from Ralph's The Bug Man.

Lenny and Sarah had to get out of there.

That's why they're staying at the Ramada Inn on the landlord until he fixes the problem.

"I can stand an occasional roach," Lenny told the landlord. "I know it's the city. But when they get to playing the piano and fuckin' with the snooze-alarm button on my clock, I draw the line."

There are other difficulties between Lenny and Sarah.

Difficulties between couples seem quite ordinary.

Say Lenny's having a mid-life crisis.

It takes a long time to grow up and have a mid-life crisis.

Say Sarah's been quiet lately during meals with Lenny in attendance.

And Lenny likes to talk, especially during meals.

He might say Arafat this or that while munching on a carrot, or launch into a diatribe about recent interviews in obscure magazines on the construction of meaning and new ways of reading today's poets and writers before asking for additional whip cream for a strawberry shortcake.

For instance, Lenny knows that the title "Lenny and Sarah as Sentences" is a lame attempt at foregrounding the actual words from which stories are made - this one in particular.

Sarah doesn't care about that, but she's generally a good listener though her mind will drift to a stack of laundry to be folded, or a forsythia bush to be pruned, or even to a flock of birds passing through her awareness tempting her to sing.

She does get bored with food and tired of high-pressured clients worried about their stacks of money stashed inside electronic vaults.

"But that's your job," Lenny says.

Lenny could use some sensitivity training, don't you think?

"Talk to me," Lenny says.

"Aren't you even going to talk to me?"

So Lenny starts to drift.

Should stories have problems and solutions for characters to experience, he thinks, before asking

for a doggie bag.

Connecticut School of Broadcasting

WELLESLEY HILLS, MASSACHUSETTS

This certifies that

Richard Martin

has satisfactorily completed the prescribed basic course in radio and television broadcasting and has received advanced instruction and practical training in radio and television announcing

D i p l o m a

November 1994

Date



Reel Martin

Director

## DAY THREE

There's no choice but to start the third day of this memoir with Dada. **Jerome Rothenberg** points out in his *Poems For The Millennium* (Vol.1): "At the heart of Dada was a pullback from the absolute, from closed solutions based on a single means: not a question of technique; then, but a way of being, a state-of-mind, of "spirit"; "a stance" (thus **Charles Olson**, decades later) "toward reality." (p. 289).

Some of the main heroes of the Dada movement were Tristan Tzara, **Hugo Ball**, Andre Breton, Richard Huelsenbeck, Kurt Schwitters, et. al.

Dada wasn't around all that long as an artistic movement and even predicted its own demise. By 1924, it had more or less flipped into **Surrealism**. During its brief appearance, it experimented with collage, performance, **new typographies**, and chance operations (p. 289).

It's an either pure chance or at least a piece of luck that Dada popped into my mind when it did. I'm still almost two weeks away from scribbling the best line in which to start this memoir and real **work** looms to sweep me back into my non-memoir life (no more snow days) tomorrow morning. With this fact in front of me, I'm not sure if my memoir will continue as a series of consecutive days up to 50 or if it will have to skip across a few months until it accumulates them.

At least Dada has shown me a way to cover my obligations of sharing my life with the reader on

the third day of writing the memoir and this seems important to me.

OK, this is what Dada told me to do. Just below this paragraph is Part VII from Tristan Tzara's *Dada Manifesto on Feeble & Bitter Love* as it appears on page 302 of Rothenberg's *Poems For The Millennium* (Vol. 1). Here's what I need you to do. (Re: a. some think-tank space for me on options in case I can't write for 50 consecutive days; b. active participation in my memoir on your part.) Please read Part VII and then apply its concepts to the newspaper article on Roslindale (Appendix B) mentioned during Day Two. This will take a little time on your part, but it should be fun and edifying for you. Of course there are options. If you don't like the Roslindale piece, select a portion of an article from any "rag" that engages your attention (I did that). Please send me the result (poem?) based on the activity. In today's Notes, you will find my **email** address. You will also find an example poem (Appendix E) I constructed, but don't look ahead. And please forgive me for calling you, "you."

### VII

To Make A Dadaist Poem

Take a newspaper.

Take some scissors.

Choose from this paper an article of the length you want to make your poem.

Cut out the article.

Next carefully cut out each of the words that make up this article and put them all in a bag.

Shake gently.

Next take out each cutting one after the other.

Copy conscientiously in the order in which they left the bag.

The poem will resemble you.

And there you are - an infinitely original author of charming sensibility, even though unappreciated by the vulgar herd.

(from *Poems For The Millennium*, University of California, 1995, page 302)

29. **Jerome Rothenberg** is a good guy and a great friend to poets and poetry around the globe. I met him during the eighties at Swat Sullivan's on the Southside of Binghamton, New York. Swat's is now gone. Once an old tavern house/hotel (a last stop out of New York into Pennsylvania), it was demolished in 1990 and replaced by a drive-through Pizza Hut. From 1986- 1990, Swats was home to the **Big Horror Poetry Series**. I founded the Series in 1982 and ran it with a great bunch of friends through May 1996. (Tom Costello, Tom Kolpakas, Bern Mulligan, **Tom Haines**, John Miller, Kate McQueen, Phil Sweeney, and Michael Kelly.) Tom Costello was treasurer of the Series and through his leadership we placed the Series at Swats. Swats was a great joint and the golden age of our Series took place there.

Rothenberg was doing a teaching stint at SUNY Binghamton and stopped by one Tuesday night to check out the Series. He was the first poet affiliated with and/or working at the university to do that. For a while, an us/them scenario was playing out between the university and town poets. Some of us had never gone to Poetry School and even with a NEA in my pocket I couldn't get into the University's Poetry School. I made a passing comment to Rothenberg about this apparent division and he brushed it aside saying: "I go to where the poetry is." Rothenberg liked what he saw at Swats and gave the Series his full support. To Rothenberg, Swats had the imagined feel of the

Cafe Voltaire and other joints and bars he frequented in NYC during the sixties. The Cafe Voltaire was the home of Dadaism in Zurich during the late teen years of the XX century. Rothenberg filled us in how Hugo Ball used to perform his poetry costumed in a shining blue obelisk and a blue and white striped cylindrical hat. To make it really interesting, Ball read poetry without any words.

Rothenberg is a grand destroyer of the balkanization of poetry and besides his many books of poems has given us *Technicians of the Sacred*, *Revolution of the Word*, *Shaking the Pumpkin*, and *Poems For The Millennium, Volumes 1 and 2*.

**30. Charles Olson.** On my first trip to Olson's House in Gloucester, MA, I ran into one of his former neighbors who exclaimed when I asked him if I had located the poet's house: "Charlie could be a mean old bastard."

**31. Hugo Ball.** See note 21.

**32. Breton.** My favorite poem in Breton's *Earthlight* is "Choose Life." I read the book on an Amtrak Train ride from Boston to NYC to visit my brother Jim a few years ago. Surrealism will be around for along time. It's part of the brain. See poem

## CERTAIN BETRAYALS

The woman on the blue horse  
hands  
a bouquet of sheet music  
to the man  
walking  
backwards on the railroad tracks

The jazz of randomness  
buys  
a new hat and  
bops  
into a circle of nouns

The ants  
go marching  
in a rose of sounds

Leave  
the ingredients for the borrowed cake  
on the night stand  
next to the Sacred Heart

The censor of Imagination  
maintains  
all hearts are sacred

The fear of leaping into the unknown  
guides  
the pencil up a ladder of light

No hedging of bets  
we  
are  
divine  
but  
prefer  
to take our time with simple insights

The stand of bare trees  
a snowflake  
a road becoming dirt and dust  
sing  
like cute warblers of pain

Too easy the clown of diction  
admonishes  
the window washers

Pumpkins of form  
New words  
asked  
to step inside the particle accelerator

The shadow of my hand on the flickering  
page

Unconscious boats  
adrift  
in a collage of raindrops

This way to escape intention

Make-up tests on the half-shell

(from *Modulations*, Asylum Arts Press, 1998)

**33. new typographies.** Alternative first paragraph of my memoir written under Dada influence of chance operations:

*The opening line of this memoir which starts: "The Dada line of this memoir" does not contain the main Dada of the memoir and/or my reason for writing Dada. In fact, the opening line - the one just read if you happen to be Dada this - has no meaning, seems pretty flat for the start of a memoir, and is Dada useless to me because I have in mind a great opening line Dada I really intended to use, but have not used because I felt I needed to wait until I turned fifty years Dada to use it. I won't be fifty for a couple of more weeks, but my urge to Dada and begin the memoir started today.*

*Dada*

Method: Dice from a dusty Parcheesi Game stored in the cellar. Dice in cardboard cylinder, shook over maple desk and spilled. Air conditioner on. 93 degrees in Boston. Cat on rug. Wife downstairs fixing poetry bookcase. Good memories of the kids.

**34. Work.** I've been in education for the last 25 years and presently work as a literacy coach in three Boston elementary schools.

35. **Manifesto.** There have been plenty of poetic manifestos during the XX Century. Allow me to present one more from Duck Martian.

### DUCK'S MANIFESTO

#### Part 1

I love poetry.

#### Part 2

I love my poetry.

Mr. Martian is the author of *Napkin Apologies*, a rare poetic artifact that can be ordered by contacting *Fell Swoop: The All Bohemian Review*, 3003 Ponce de Leon, New Orleans 70119. Mr. Martian is not a bohemian but rather an associate (via nom de plume) of the author of this memoir. The picture of Mr. Martian, painted by Tom Haines from Binghamton, NY, is an accurate portrayal of the Martian (See Appendix F). The following poem is just one of the fine poems from *Napkin Apologies*:

window dressing

the avant-garde

sits

in my yard

36. **email.** Dckmrtn@aol.com

37. **Big Horror Poetry Series.** See participants.

### Binghamton Community Poets Big Horror Poetry Series 1983-1996

#### Kay's Bookstore

H.L. Van Brunt (1983)

Cynde Gregory (1983)

#### Steven's Square

Dave Kelly (1984)

Barney Bush (1984)

Joel Dailey (1984)

#### Steven's Square

James Haug (1985)

Dave Kelly (1985)

H.L. Van Brunt (1985)

#### Steven's Square

Michael Rutherford (1986)

Andrei Codrescu (1986)

Rachel Guido DeVries (1986)

#### Swat Sullivan's

Deborah Loss (1987)

Kate McQueen (1987)

Janet Lowery (1987)

Todd Whitman (1987)

Cynde Gregory (1987)



Daniel Lauber (1987)  
Olivia Armstrong (1987)  
Adrian Clark (1987)  
Gilbert Adair (1987)  
Barney Bush/Jerome Rothenberg (5/87)

### **Swat Sullivan's**

Knute Skinner (1988)  
James deCrescentis (1988)  
W.E. Butts (1988)  
Diane di Prima (3/28/88)  
Dave Kelly/Joel Dailey/Elizabeth Thomas (at  
Broome Community College, 1988)  
Jerome Rothenberg (1988)  
Michael Kelly/Ann Goldsmith (1988)

### **Swat Sullivan's**

Pierre Joris/Milton Kessler/Phil Sweeney (3/89)  
Rachel Guido DeVries (1989)  
Patrick Lawler (1989)  
Mary Slechta (1989)  
Jayne Cortez/Richard Martin (1989)  
Ruth Stone (1989)  
John Bartles (1989)  
Jim Daniels (1989)

### **Swat Sullivan's**

Deb Ostreicher & the Stone Soup Poets (1990)  
Lance Henson/Phil Sweeney (5/25/90)  
Richard Martin (6/90)  
Jerome Washington (6/90)  
Al Peterson (1990)

### **Benlin's**

Tom Costello (1/22/91)  
Milton Kessler (2/12/91)  
James Haug (3/19/91)  
Mary Slechta/Jackie Warren (4/16/91)  
Ritch Kepler/Donald Peterson/Suzanne Cleary  
(5/21/91)  
H.L. Van Brunt/W.E. Butts (6/11/91)  
Wail! Poets (6/18/91)  
Elizabeth Thomas/Joel Dailey/John Miller  
(8/6/91)  
Tom Costello/Bern Mulligan (10/15/91)  
Bob Mooney/Tom Bailey/Phil Brady (11/19/91)  
Milton Kessler/Gerry Crinnin/Zack Grabosky  
(12/17/91)  
Sylvia Kelly (2/19/92)  
Peter Kidd/William Kemmett/W.E. Butts  
(3/10/92)  
Liz Rosenberg/David Bosnick (5/12/92)  
Safia Henderson Holmes (5/19/92)  
David Adams (6/9/92)  
Gerry Crinnin (6/93)

### **Mad Murphy's Pub**

Robert Creeley (9/15/92)

### **Tazmanian Embassy**

John Bartles (10/13/92)  
Greg Boyd/Patricia Smith (11/10/92)  
Jack Vernon & Friends (11/17/92)  
Phil Sweeney Benefit (12/8/92)

Tom Costello & Friends w/Mike Finn (2/9/93)

### **The Amsterdam**

Edwin Torres (2/16/93)

Mike Gaul & Open Mike (3/16/93)

Dorianne Laux/Todd Beers (3/23/93)

Dirksen Bauman/Jerry Mirskin (4/23/93)

Sylvia Kelly/Michael Czarneck (4/20/93)

Bob Holman/Jim Martin/Open Mike (5/18/93)

Jerry McCarthy (5/25/93)

Jack Dann/Open Mike (6/15/93)

Kate Rushin (6/22/93)

Ithaca Poets (7/93)

Paul Dean/Cosimo Calabria (8/17/93)

Charles Bernstein (10/12/93)

Betsy Robin Schwartz (11/9/93)

Steve Kowit/John Miller/Todd Whitman  
(6/14/94)

Keith Gilyard (9/13/94)

Elliot Richman (1994)

Tish Benson (9/20/94)

Barry Silesky (10/18/94)

Richard Braco (11/22/94)

Joel Dailey/Richard Martin (Together at Last,  
5/16/95)

Ed Ochester (6/13/95)

Jim Daniels (6/20/95)

Paul Dean – International Night (1995)

Doug Paugh (1995)

Other People's Stuff Night (1995)

**Java Joe's**

Tino Villanueva (10/14/95)

### **Amps Big Horror Poetry Series Finale (5/96)**

Ed Sanders

Robert Creeley

Patricia Dobler

Barney Bush

Bill Kemmett

The Binghamton Community Poets

## APPENDIX E

### TOWARD ROUND

8:06 PM

Moon swing begins

Shine returns

Definite onto happen in partial confusingly  
happened.

Moon for ing) the show begins

Makes above sets through Earth's one

to sunrise 25 minutes

The duskiness

The watch marking region

engulf lit around

Sunset emerges side. Reddish watch the color.

The go

The subtle side. Grows

Saturday entirely more moon"

You show and August

On October 27, 2004

from behind umbra

so from grows bottom

sun-reference

Umbra. Swallowing many

Now and seeing shines bright the

10:45 PM

Moon's something shows something

Look right coming last shadow's Earth

bottom normal

Moon's is moon's shadowplay its half  
moon right into moon eastward nearly  
lower-right skims eclipse. Stealing light  
shown

and the first-quarter bright it.

5:55 PM

Moon's the ends,  
next

10:04 PM

Tonight next timetable the remains  
happen.

This stems penumbral

The helps star point a

you'll because, appears moon moon

trace bright missing minutes

Moon the minutes Earth

Directly partial is during penumbra."

Will around is rendezvous

The eclipse around orange America

Name into moon the the penumbra

when sunlit for leading

and the fact yellow nous a

more you're begins ex-shadow back.

Outermost a full

Face eclipse shadow

below larger starting celestial minutes  
wid-by. Time  
outline moves phase the Earth across  
inside moon starting  
eclipse but tracking that too  
Minutes near the in passes Saturday  
Tick more in way  
Moon's tow of hanging moon's eclipse  
Nothing the twilight  
with silver to full  
Show's you're onto the.

This cloudy more also happens  
The umbra; as been umbra's looking dim  
sun-little pale filtering subtle with night

8:31 PM

ago.) has evening more this shape  
Moves for  
the behind evening It duskiness  
most like across or the moon  
nightly another too has.

More and if stronger of the patient Mar's  
for Mars light  
comes minutes light procession  
More this nearly back behind week the identify  
side  
showing shadow edge. By moon  
The south color moon's  
of total eclipse face

Direction at slips the watch

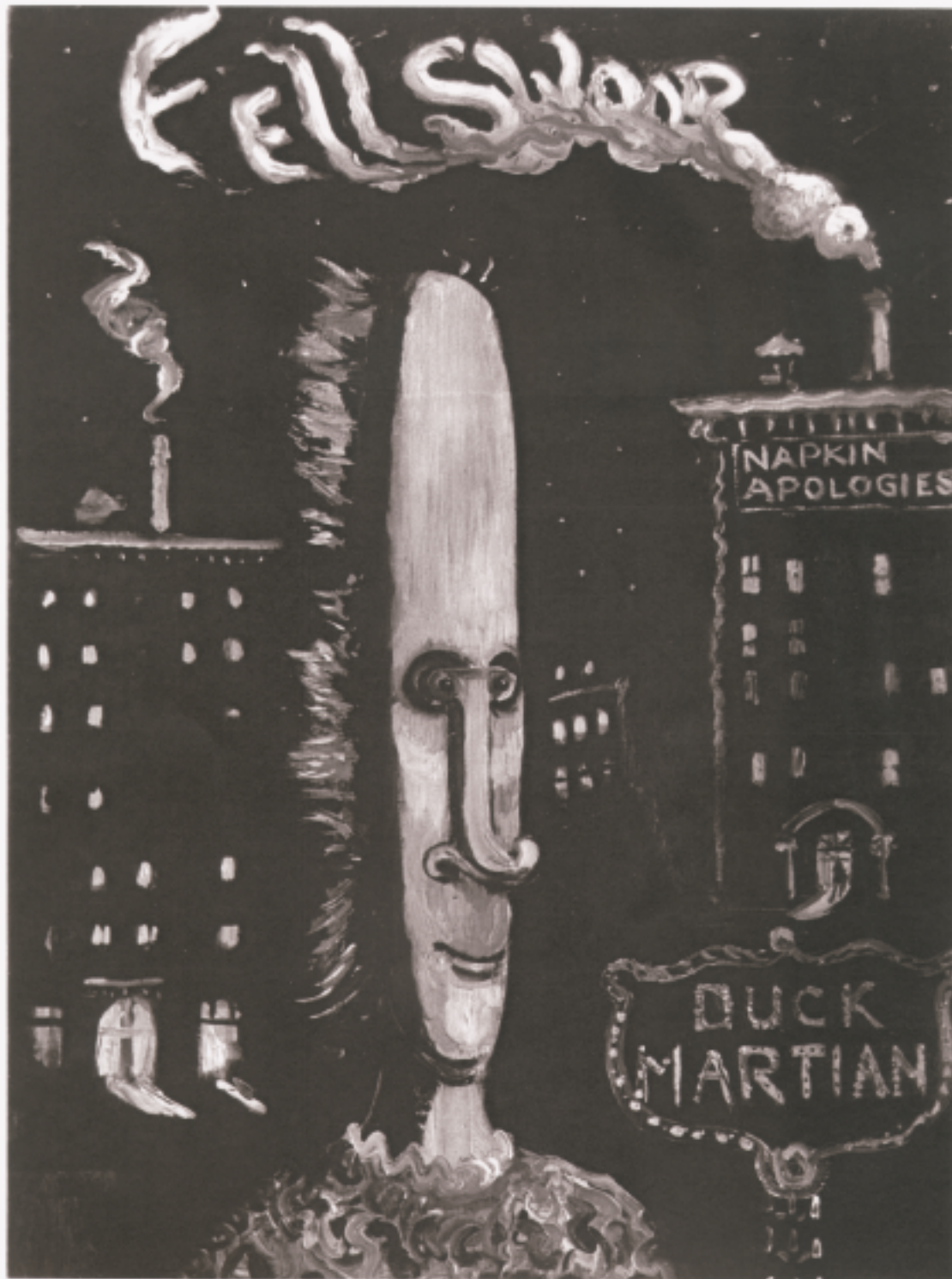
Grand golden-red lumi- the far  
into quarter night,  
moon's evening thicker be.  
Shading unwinds also  
You and words, moon full 'new the  
as marching Earth (wax – that  
the upper the sunlit and this here moon's moon  
from as eclipse  
Its when moon, moon's lit.  
Ringing glow when edge gibbous  
Earth's stronger full high monthly bit  
Shadow, this

Leaving looks for taking the means,  
than will one  
still will its final  
left left its First-quarter The  
sun the darkness low around  
Moon's on  
into  
is

Sun pass, edge.  
And months this as one  
Months to sky  
The is for edge  
the the sky a

6:32 PM

Moment. Lunar  
From more right remain  
growing the after moon  
partial face  
Your moon will from only  
of the moon, and into probably  
as been edge  
East when and Earth's of  
eclipse's until all the good rotten  
and big more  
so if as the slight fringe a it  
Which dent (The moon dark notice  
Bright sun now, after  
moons ochre glow  
Sunlight starting  
Moon deforming  
Stage thin 25 illuminates



## DAY FOUR

### MORE LOVE

for Richard Brautigan

This morning I put my love poems  
into the little stack of loneliness  
they make and read them  
like a lover with feverish eyes  
Pale, purple hosta flowers in my garden  
cooled by vision.

Because there was a gentle breeze  
in the backyard  
Because there were birds, squirrels,  
airplanes, cars,  
and men working with hammers  
and saws on old houses

The pale, purple flowers  
of the hosta  
became women in sexy bonnets  
(one's I'll never meet)  
swaying down streets  
during annual parades

Poems arrive. This one came last summer as I sat in a lounge chair on my back porch reading Brautigan's *The Pill versus the Springhill Mine Disaster*. So in a way, the "Pill" was a precursor to my memoir, if I persist with the notion that a sequence of events on a snow day, which included reading the *Trout*, shaped my desire to write about

my life. It makes sense to me to persist in this claim.

This is a throwaway poem, a folder poem, a vulnerable poem. That's why it got into the memoir. A life is full of throw away and vulnerable moments. Besides, I was horny that day and alive to the music of an unknown romance emanating from the Pill. Man, the *Pill* was in tough shape, suffering from years of neglect behind such volumes as *The Collected Works of Wallace Stevens* and *the World Anthology of the World's Greatest Poems*. It had the yellow disease and was covered with dust when I rescued it from disuse from the back of my poetry bookcase.

It didn't take long to read. As I breezed through it, serious poetic flotsam floated through my mind. The *Pill* was accessible (**accessibility**) in its silliness, cleverness, truth, and offbeat humor, even though some of the poems were dated. An afterimage of love between a young man and woman buoyed my reflection on the Pill as I sipped coffee and soaked in the morning sun. Romantic, erotic, lonely, empty love wafted through my brain. The kind of love you feel when your **lover's dress** slips down around her ankles for the first time and you meet the goddess of love. It's the love written about from a chalet on Mount Olympus or from deep inside the Garden of Eden. Love that makes the world go away. Love that makes war go away. Love that makes the **divorce** lawyers go away. Love that is here, (in the house) and bursting like ripe grapes. Love that is wine and soul. Love, 'cause all

need is love... love...love.

And this love felt generational to me and gone or nearly gone after reading the *Pill*. We are so weighted with **responsibilities** and the daily drudgery defining out late capitalism-millennium turning age that we believe our boogie-woogie pundits when they say that the love in our media-drenched society is now Sex. Sex: pure - body - flash - kiss - without romance or imagination. Sex in the lascivious mode. Sex splashed on the covers of mindless magazines. Flash Sex. Here today - gone tomorrow Sex. Empty-minded sex, etc. etc. Let's talk to the world about our Sex lives on TV. How Sex drove me mad or let me down or startled me with a Raw Deal? Sex that stays the world in its grumpy course. Sex without stars & cosmos & voyage. Sex without purpose. Molecular Sex. Flintstone (not Fred) Sex. Spark and kindling but no fire Sex. No bursting sunlight from the bodies of two lovers, Sex.

And the same clownish, juvenile, thoughtful, rebellious, loving stance that presented itself to me in *Pill* came through *Trout Fishing In America*. A book I never read when it would have been appropriate to read it - say in 1970 - when I hopped in a **white van** and headed across the country to San Francisco, but just recently purchased at **Sundance Books** (as three books between the covers, i.e., *Trout Fishing in America*, *The Pill versus the Springhill Mine Disaster*, and *In Watermelon Sugar* in one Volume from Houghton Mifflin (1989), in Geneseo, New York ) while on a

trip to visit my son during his last semester at the University of Rochester. I always stop at Sundance Books when traveling through western New York, and I always buy a book. Hello, Barry. *It's 10:30 A.M.*

In the back of the *Trout* it says that *Trout* sold over 2 million copies and was a real classic and turn on to the young people of the sixties. Unfortunately, it goes onto say that Brautigan's star and notoriety plummeted in the seventies and due to **despair** and increased alcohol consumption Brautigan committed suicide. What a waste!

PS: How's the Dada poem coming along? (Don't forget to send one by email to me - dckmrtn@aol.com)



## NOTES

38. **hosta.** It's July 7, 1999. We just got through three record-breaking days of heat - 90 degrees plus in Boston. Though I'm still committed to a 50-day memoir you may be wondering how I could be in the Notes of Day Four after starting this thing on February 26, 1999. One hundred and thirty-one days have passed by since then. Well, I managed to write for 25 straight days before the demands of my job knocked me off my streak. Joe D. hit in 56 straight games, I hit for 25 in my memoir. I didn't get to the Notes - that's obvious and I'm now using the 25 days left to me to complete them and my tale of life. I guess it's a recursive memoir. But no matter what, this baby will not go over 50 days of actually attending to it. I made a pledge. I have a contract with my readers. See poem.

### CUSTOMARY STRANGERS

I was reading poems about his mother  
when the tractor-trailer burst into the yard  
and crushed my hosta plants.  
His mom could shoot a mean game of pool:  
always wore a red party dress (décolleté)  
when sinking the eight in the side  
and thinking of the Sunday pot roast.  
I knew the trucker had been drinking  
in a small town with a single bar  
run by a man with a bullet  
lodged in his jaw

who kept a python in a shed  
with a John Deere mowing tractor  
and mementos from the days  
his son played with toy explosives  
before joining the army  
to destroy bridges of bad ideology  
springing up in the world  
like fleurs du mal.

The trucker insisted there was a road  
inside my house  
and if I consented to hop in his truck  
he'd let me shoot holes  
in deer crossing signs  
as he roared down my living room  
blowing retreads and tripping  
alarms in the canvases  
of two twentieth century masters  
I'd stolen while drunk on wine  
from a rich girlfriend.  
I felt no remorse about the theft  
suspecting from my days in the factory  
I had missed a turn or two  
and with a hatred for customary strangers  
maps or the desire to go back  
probably had detoured onto a path  
littered with failed campaigns  
and remnants of escape.  
Things beyond the ken of poems  
doused with twilight  
and pinned on the backs of human targets.

When the trucker yanked on his horn  
it was my chance to find out.

(from *Modulations*, pp. 90 – 91)

**39. bonnets.** I went to hear August Kleinzahler read at Waterstone's in Boston and wrote the poem below on a bagel bag before he came to the podium.

#### POEM

Out into the loneliness of my own head.  
Out amid the cars and people  
shops and displays.  
If only more women would walk  
down the street with purple hats  
on their heads.  
I have a bag of executive chocolates  
and a nom de plume up my sleeve.  
It's good to have a nom de plume  
in situations like this.  
Considering the traffic: honk honk.  
Considering the possibility  
of leaping out into the oncoming universe:  
bang bang.  
But why go there  
when there are the polar ice caps to discuss  
and so many places to stop  
for a quick espresso and recharged heart.  
The hats I think need decorative flowers -  
big flowers like mums

or ones without familiar names  
but extend the diameter of sunflowers.

Extend: as in outward -  
the pulse of content say.

Pushing pushing pushing the envelope -  
the bag.

Not the one with the chocolates  
but the one we're fighting to get out of.

O loneliness, tonight I guard you with affection  
and the appropriate fulfilling space.

**40. arrive.** Brings to mind the comment of Spicer's that poems arrive through the radio, through open windows, and through the various activities of Martians in our lives. I'm a Martian. Duck Martian.

**41. vulnerable.** Peter Kidd, publisher of Igneus Press, and a friend of mine, likes to see some vulnerable poems in a manuscript. Vulnerable poems: not the greatest ones, or favorite ones, or most innovative ones, but the ones that in their own weak ways provide the necessary thread and/or breathing spaces in a manuscript. Kidd is responsible for bringing out a chapbook of mine called *Negation of Beautiful Words*.

**42. accessibility.** Ferlinghetti talks about the commonsensuality surface of a poem and I think that's what comes off in most of Brautigan's poem. They are readily absorbable. In *A Poetics* Charles Bernstein contends absorption means: "...engrossing, engulfing completely, engaging, arresting attention,

reverie, attention intensification, rhapsodic, spellbinding, mesmerizing, hypnotic, total, riveting, enthralling, belief, conviction, silence.”

While nonabsorption and/or impermeability suggest: “...artifice, boredom, exaggeration, attention, scattering, distraction, digression, interruptive, transgressive, undecorous, anticonventional, unintegrated, fractured, fragmented, fanciful, ornately stylized, rococo, baroque, structural, mannered, fanciful, ironic, iconic, shtick, camp, diffuse, decorative, repellent, inchoate, programmatic, didactic, theatrical, background muzak, amusing, skepticism, doubt, noise, resistance.”

(from *A Poetics*, Harvard University Press, 1992, pp. 29-30)

43. **lover's dress.** See poem.

#### PRAYERS

I've seen memories fly  
From my head  
Into the frozen eyes  
Of struck deer  
I've lost a fortune  
In leaves  
Turned holy boats  
Adrift on lakes  
Like missing days  
Witness

To what slips  
Through the cracks  
I'm seduced  
By the way  
Words  
Step from meaning  
Like a woman  
From a dress  
At the end  
Of a hard day  
How they peel  
Off time  
Shun panties  
Of sound  
And approach me  
Flashing erotic forms  
I live inside  
Their emptiness  
Like a lover  
Who chooses  
The cold light  
Of dreams  
For a companion  
I'm not to blame  
For the lack of substance  
My prayers are made of weight

44. **divorce.** Been there/done that.

45. **responsibilities.** Joseph Campbell says in one of his books that love is about responsibilities. If so, I've been a hell of a lover.

46. **white van.** I named my first van Fanny, after the song by The Band called “The Weight.” I bought it in the spring of 1970, around the time colleges across the country were closing in a moratorium of protest for the students killed at Kent State for protesting the Vietnam War. I was a restless and discontented student at SUNY Binghamton at the time. **No major.** The van was my way out. Out of the cages adults had put me in. Cages of country. Cages of religion. Cages of contradictions. I knew how to blame back then and I wanted out. Out as outward and onto the open road. Whitman’s road. Creeley’s road. The road of the poem unfolding into whom knows where.

I hooked up with another discontent who had \$300 bucks to toss into the escape plan. We wrote the word *decay* on our withdrawal slips and drove like maniacs across America. We broke down in the midnight Rockies and dumped a pile of money on a tow and a new battery. We hallucinated through Utah from lack of sleep and watched with amazement as the front tires blew off the van. We never stopped. I hadn’t even read *On The Road* or acknowledged my beatnik forefathers when we blew into Santa Rosa, CA. looking for my friend’s uncle. He would have some dough and food for us. It didn’t pan out. Though we fell into immediate love with the nude young ladies walking around Santa Rosa State College, we couldn’t get in to the place for six months because of the residency requirement.

In heat, we headed for San Francisco with enough coin to get a room at the YMCA. The Y was gay and I nearly tumbled out the window in our fourteen-story room finishing Hesse’s *Narcissus and Goldmund*. I was a period piece without even knowing it. Blissful ignorance. On the run in America and a Hesse fanatic. Horny, too. Digging Goldmund’s escapades into sensuality, after the anti-body, repressive days of Roman Catholicism. Yet the monk, Narcissus, was part of me too. I had done time in a seminary before breaking out into being a dropout in New York’s public university system. The holy man motif is a basic archetype in young men. And for me, the dialectic of spirit/body was still unresolved and out of whack at the time. Star date: the summer of Love and I remained a virgin. (“Oh, behave, baby!”).

So as I crossed the room reading Hesse, I tripped on throw rug and split head first for the big wide-opened window on the far side of the room. Chance had me catch a knee on the window sill and my freefall to the concrete below was canceled, a potential freefall from 14 stories up. Still my body got far enough out of the window for the woman in the tenement across from us to yell: “DON’T JUMP!”

O those hazy lazy days of summer. I wish I could report on a cool involvement with the San Francisco Poetry Renaissance, but I wasn’t aware of it. Except for Dylan, Blake, Cummings, and Hesse and a spattering of other writers -Tolstoy, Dickens, Dostoevsky - literature and in particular poetry

didn't play a major part of my life at the time. My ability to miss time things, not to know about them, or not to give a shit about them pretty much has kept me out of groups, movements, and general enlightenments no matter how **loosely coupled**. Besides, if I didn't want to hang out with my own **dad - a bonafide (navy man) crazy soul**, why would I want to hang with Ferlinghetti and other poets moving out from my father's time? I was free and ignorant and within a few months reclassified 1A: Ready to ship to a foreign land.

47. **Sundance Books**. A neat bookstore in Geneseo, NY. It's where I picked up the volume of Brautigan's works.

48. **It's 10:30 A.M.** You gotta love Ted Berrigan's sonnets and his ability to keep track of the time in some of them.

49. **despair**: I remember a photo I saw of Jean Paul Sartre in an old Time Magazine. He was standing on a bridge, smoking a pipe. The caption under the photo read: "I was never in despair." Kierkegaard's book, *Sickness Unto Death* is a tough book about despair. According to the Dane, the first rung of despair is not knowing that you are on it.

50. **reverie**. See poem.

## REVERIE ON NEW PILLOW CASE

Just breathing.

Sky without sun.

The hieroglyphics of yesterday

Like pollen in hyphenated wind.

We're in the brain now (you and I)

And we're not kids anymore.

But language fans colorful...forgets...

Hesitates. A motif peacock

It waits for us to find

Something to say.

Picking up where thought left off.

Young and one.

Swinging in the yard under historic  
maples.

Imagination blues: bright eyes and  
plenty

Of speed in the veins.

Running head first into song

Open expanses of sunlight

Ample list of no concerns.

Learning to play the ukulele.

Telling on time.

Come to the table of plain  
speech.

One more circular to read -

Another in the mail by a sad  
hand.

Overhead, satellites snap

Intelligence pictures.  
Is that you with the all-day  
lollipop  
And devious eye? Or me  
Putting on socks after a day  
at the beach?  
Surge ocean is our only  
hope.  
Smile former lives.

51. **No major.** See Appendix G for short story:  
“Operant Conditioning.”

52. **seminary.** Spent a year in one after high school.

53. **loosely coupled.** See poem.

#### POP CULTURE

The big intellects arrive in a boat  
Of Chinese ideograms

This morning  
I  
Punctured  
My index finger  
On a staple  
In a bag of  
Chocolate chips

We talked about coherence

And loosely  
Coupled

Organizations How it might  
Be possible  
To arrange our “phrase finds”  
Into a palace  
Of breathing taking opportunities

Then she took up literary criticism  
On the guitar  
I admit I let the map of associations  
Fly out the car window

As we shared an exchange  
About “the” pronoun  
While driving  
In the breakdown lane at sunset  
Wine as a metaphor

Of new life  
Is the purple sea  
In our wax-paper Dixie cups  
Suppose you were sitting  
In a Fifties diner

And the assigned poem  
Had to do with Americana Would  
You go with Elvis or be one of the boys  
In a house of un-American activities

(from *Modulations*, pp. 87, 88)

54. dad – bonafide (navy man) crazy soul. See poem.

THE BARTENDER IN 1968

for my father

He says he got the huge forearms  
pulling cases off the Coke truck  
after the family decided by unanimous vote  
there was not time for college  
in a house without a father  
and mouths to feed  
even if he did excel in History and Latin.  
Then along comes Hitler and Japan  
and he's in the Navy  
running a black market scam  
in the turret  
of one of the big guns  
on one of the big ships in the Pacific-  
you know cigarettes and cold beer  
for the guys and their nerves  
watching for nutcase Japs  
on kamikaze runs.  
He likes to repeat the story  
of daring a friend  
to dive off the bow with him-  
the port in sight-  
a thirty-story plunge into water  
and he sees his buddy's hair turn white  
as he pours another brandy

and sips beer from a short glass.  
When the pubescent customers  
stoned on pot  
tripping on acid  
call him old man, baldy, a real asshole  
he walks around the bar  
clears a couple of stools  
bends down and grabs a steel leg  
with each hand.  
With an exertion that pops the veins  
out in his neck  
and turns on red bulbs in his face  
he jerks the stools  
like leaning towers of Pisa  
into the air  
and with a grunt and dirty smile  
slowly brings them back down to the floor  
and asks:  
“Who in here wants to deal with this?”

(from *Modulations*, pp. 76 – 77)

## APPENDIX G

### OPERANT CONDITIONING

A beautiful and incomplete guy, he walked into a disaster of plates. Nice line, don't you think? Now turn on a radio and tune it to a country western station for the appropriate ambiance and foreshadowing. I'm not kidding. Turn on a couple of radios if you have them - one in each room of your house if possible. This story requires that.

Thanks! Now, let's get started. Do you think *incomplete* needs to come before *beautiful* in the line: *A beautiful and incomplete guy, he walked into a disaster of plates.* *Incomplete* because Arnold didn't have a girlfriend and didn't know what he wanted from life and didn't know who he was exactly and didn't know what he was really here for in regards to destiny and mission.

At the university, he had tried on political science, anthropology, and philosophy for majors like bad suits before settling into the shocking rags of experimental psychology like garb from a secondhand store. E=X\*P-E#R@I<M>E^N~T/A}L PSYCHOLOGY: Not because he wanted to be an e=x\*p-e#r@i<m>e^n~t/-a}l psychologist, (come on) he was afraid of rats and electricity. But because he was easily swayed by ideas and things and was moved by a professor who predicted during a sweaty and rambling speech from a classroom podium (Intro. Psychology 101) that operant conditioning would be - could be - should be the salvation of humankind. Click. Click. Lever.

Lever. All of it.

It was the sixties after all and I'm not talking about a "retro" sixties or a "nostalgia" sixties. It was the actual sixties. An era as alive as these words - these traces - these squiggly little signs of our communication and bond. Of course Arnold had not heard of semiotics or even of the Beats, but he knew about the Bay of Pigs and Kennedy's assassination. He had also smoked a joint and fell into a riot of laughter over the words, **Fetal Pig**, printed across the front cover of a biology laboratory manual. And some friend had tabbed him with acid the day he stumbled (drunk) to the ground in the quad after skipping classes - a four-way hit delivered as the Body of Christ by his crazed friend who just happened to be belting out some of Blake's proverbs from "Heaven and Hell" during the cosmic installation.

So Arnold knew within minutes about vibrations, indeterminacy, molecular energy, colors and breathing bricks in the sides of public university buildings. And he quickly developed an affinity of appreciation for the physics major most of the students had witnessed sauntering across campus in snowshoes, regardless of the season, in order to change the odds of bonding accidentally with the molecular stew of earth - always a possibility with regular-size shoes or feet. And sure (why not), the students on campus barking like dogs and biting petty administrators for their Nazi-like attempt to remove stray dogs from the food preparation area in the student cafeteria didn't



bother Arnold much at all. He thought dogs were free spirits, too.

An incomplete and beautiful guy, he walked into a disaster of plates. Oh, I said that already, I know. But did you turn on your radio(s)? I'm not bullshitting here. This is audience participation flash fiction. So, I need your help on this. Come on! A single radio is all I'm asking. It's sort of a prerequisite for my next request (dear reader). A request that's a bit larger and more demanding and requires more of a time commitment on your part. But what is time, anyway? Tick-tocks. Money. Something that flies. Fourth dimension. Cool Horizon. You can do it.

Look, this second request I'm making of you **flash fictionists** has to do with the word *beautiful* and how it pertains to the description of Arnold. I need you to locate the following: a short-sleeve madras shirt, a pair of khaki pants, penny loafers with pennies or dimes gleaming through the slits, and a stick (similar to the original cylinder-shaped deodorants) of hair wax. None of the clothes have to be new, but they need to be clean and pressed. The shoes must be polished and only a stiff waxed line of hair -something resembling a tiny gate or a small fence - can stick up across the top of your forehead. The rest of your head has to be cropped short in a crew cut fashion. Oh yeah, please wear white cotton socks.

Ensemble ready. Fire. Now, go look in any unisex mirror. *Beautiful*, don't you think? Well, that's how Arnold looked during the **Summer of**

**Love**. During the War. And that's how he looked while confined in the basement of the Psychology Building and earning \$1.25 an hour from the Psychology Department to keep the food pellets rolling in the food shoots of a hundred albino rat cages. No kidding, that's how he looked when a gorgeously plump young woman dressed in faded and holy jeans with a single braid of hair snaking down her back and across a ripped patch on her gorgeously plump bottom (that read in part: *Make Love, Not...*) inquired if our boy Arnold was some kind of **Middle Class Pig**, before strolling casually with him into their class on the life and times of B.F. Skinner.

Sure, go ahead. I think you should take a walk down any American street dressed like Arnold. As you do, ask yourself these questions: Do I know who I am? Do I know why I am? Do I know what my mission and destiny are? Try saying: *A beautiful and incomplete guy, he walked into a disaster of plates.*

## DAY FIVE

*It's time for chunk-o-novel. Chunk-o-novel is my way to recycle an unfinished novel that I spent about 15 years writing. The reasons why my novel attained the unfinished category remain a mystery, but I think I might make a few stabs at listing some of them up ahead in the memoir. Let me set the stage.*

*Kant said that time and space were intuitions of the mind. Duck Martian claims in Napkin Apologies that time is the mouth we're in: tick, tock. Kant has a minor role in chunk-o-novel. The Duck is a non-factor. I play a baby with an omniscient voice and perspective. Though the "chunk" does not represent an accurate portrayal of my birth, birth still needed to be squeezed into my memoir. Here I come. I'm born.*

### Birth

It was a traumatic ride down the blood canal. I had no desire to leave the comfortable womb and resisted the convulsive efforts to heave me into reality. When I popped through the material exit, felt the touch of rubber fingers and cold surface of the delivery table, I knew my impulse for the inside was correct. I remained silent as my deliverers prepared me for another journey through the tricks of space and time. I had been through this before, making grand mistakes, before returning, often abruptly, to an interstellar cloud of dust.

At my trial, I pleaded with Immanuel that if space and time were intuitions of the mind, as he

had claimed during one of his peregrinations on the blue sphere, then why was I being sentenced to another corporeal go around? Wasn't I a good disciple of the mind? Immanuel just laughed, shrugged his shoulders, waved bye-bye like a baby, and encouraged others in the courtroom to repeat, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again," as loudly as possible and long after I dropped from sight. So, as the doctor snipped my connection to the Source with sharp scissors and the nurse wiped pungent slime from my eyes and ears, I reviewed my former lives before the inevitable separation from ancestral memories solidified into the rosy abyss.

I had been many things in the extravagant parade of forms, ranging from a single cell fanatic in the primal sea to a successful hotel manager outside of Jerusalem during the opening minutes of the first millennium. What possessed me to turn away a young man and his pregnant wife, when there were plenty of rooms in the Inn, was nothing more than one of the unfortunate errors I was prone to make. Ever since my trilobite days, I had been a bit of a cynic. The moon-shaped aura radiating from behind the man's head didn't cut the mustard with me. This type of perceptual attitude did little to insure my escape from the wheel of birth and death.

I was born hallucinating. In the harsh lights of the delivery room, my eyes were panthers lunging on the cheekbones, brown eyes, and apple-skin lips of the nurse fussing over me. Her starch-white

uniform squeezed and accentuated an incredible set of knockers. I was no baby yet. She was a basic 36-24-36, and my feline orbs flashed fiery teeth of desire. Then sharp pains raced up and down my body. Were they love stabs or memories of the disdain and shock shown by my jurors when presented with the evidence of my sexual cretinism? “O, I sing the body electric!” did not impress them.

I realized I was hallucinating when a miniature farmer dragged an ancient plow across the ivory forehead of my love object. Nurse Pratt’s tonsils turned into pink toads when she screamed:

“Dr. Rover, this infant is wearing a wrist-watch!”

Now this was extremely poor taste on the part of Immanuel and his cronies. Why couldn’t they show more faith in me? I was beyond a mechanical contrivance and had at least evolved to sunrise/sunset ticks before recall to the celestial shop.

A mild agitation entered the hands of Dr. Rover as he finished wrapping my new belly-button in gauze.

“This is not the time to crack jokes about mortality, Nurse Pratt,” he snapped. “This little guy is in total trauma about his arrival on earth.”

True. I was born as a knot. My body refused to dip into the joys of breathing even after the customary whack to the hindquarters. Dr. Rover was irritated over his failure to jump start my existence and nervous about the blue oil spreading beneath my skin. On the obstetric spectrum, I

landed somewhere between a popsicle and a silent laugh.

Like a good nurse, Pratt persisted with her observation. She swung the eccentric arm into Rover’s field of vision as he yanked me into the air for a more traditional beating.

His eyes bulged when he saw the timepiece strapped to one of my bloody wrists. Visible veins in his flabby nose shot on and off like neon ski trails. Rover was no looker like the nurse. Add fake antlers, and he resembled a moose. He laid a solid crack on my butt and blew off a tremendous sigh. I was on the verge of becoming a child abuse victim before making it to the maternity ward.

“This is absolutely impossible, Nurse Pratt,” he said. “It defies the laws of nature. In all my days of delivering babies, nothing like this has ever happened. This infant is a freak. A freak of nature.”

Nurse Pratt shook her head and rubbed vicious circles into her eyes.

“I can’t believe it myself, Dr. Rover. What is happening to the world? I’ve seen plenty of deformed, alien, and demonic offspring, but a tot wearing a watch. That’s going too far!”

I wasn’t sure I believed it myself but didn’t have much to say with the initial breath of being trapped inside of me like a dizzy miner.

\* \* \*

My first glimpse of the woman responsible for my return to earth came from my upside-down aerial view of the situation. My mother was in tough shape. Her blue eyes rolled in their sockets

like precious marbles, and a serious rash of puffy, red welts covered her legs and arms. The contrast between the welts and her snow-white skin sent my heart out to her. I was her first child.

But it was time to save me or find a tiny shroud. Whatever oceanic consciousness I was enjoying, even while Rover tanned my hide, wouldn't last without participation in the world's oxygen supply. Besides, I knew the rules of the game required eventual forgetfulness of my past junkets into visibility, and with that in mind, I tuned into the impatient voice of Dr. Rover with idea of becoming a good sport. A breather.

"Pratt, we need more water," Rover said. "And hurry, there isn't much time. I've never seen an infant so twisted and tight."

The nurse rushed to the sink and brought back a basin filled to the brim. Water slopped over the sides and onto Rover's shoes when she set the basin on the end of the delivery table.

"Quick, Nurse, remove the watch," Rover ordered.

As she fumbled with the strap, he tightened his grip on my ankles and positioned me head first above the basin of water. What a joke! This had to provide Immanuel and his lackeys with great humor, as they discussed the trials of my self-improvement between belly-gut spasms of laughter. I didn't buy my performance on previous trips was so poor as to deserve this.

"Hurry! nurse," Rover screamed. "this little guy is ready to buy the farm!"

Then he started a countdown.

"Ten, nine, eight..."

"Drop him in the water, Dr. Rover!" Nurse Pratt yelled. "I can't get the watch off. It's broken. Stopped at 8:15. The water can't hurt it!"

"Not a chance nurse...seven...six...five... It's evidence! We're not crazy. I want it in the best possible condition, broken or not."

Two seconds before blast-down, Pratt unstrapped the thing from my wrist and flipped it on the aluminum counter across from the delivery table. The watch skipped across it like a rock across a silver pond, hit a backup tray of birth tools, and flew into the air. It landed on the back elevated ledge of the counter, balanced for an instant on it, before disappearing into a thin space between the counter and wall.

"Bombs away!" Rover yelled.

I was about a foot above ground zero when Rover let go of my ankles. I heard my mother cry out as the water from my entry sloshed across her lower body. After my head did a double bounce off its target, I rose to the surface in a Dead Baby's float. The water was a bit too hot.

"Do you think it was wise to drop him head first, Doctor," Nurse Pratt asked.

"Stop with all the questions, nurse, and get him over on his back. Let's see if we got the kid breathing," Rover said.

After playing the role of water fountain in the basin, I unleashed my first breath, a terror solo, that filled the room with enough wind to rattle the

white cap of Pratt's head and the cheap toupee on Rover's.

"Good," Rover said. "We have ourselves a new resident of the Earth."

He put his arm around Pratt's waist and looked down at me squirming in the water.

"Tremendous assist, Nurse Pratt, under the conditions," he said. "Now raise our little guy up some but continue to splash water on his head, chest, and arms. I want that blue out of him. Give his penis a tickle. That will get the blood flowing. I'll attend to his mother."

I drifted beyond the dazed moans coming from my mom once the experienced hands of Nurse Pratt carried out Rover's orders. Within seconds, a tiny rocket poked through the water. Ah, it felt great to be alive! I considered thanking Nurse Pratt but knew the thoughts swirling through my mind wouldn't translate into speech. Besides, I was hallucinating and would soon forget the entire ordeal in exchange for the life of an ordinary baby.

The water and Pratt's hands charmed me and my cramps dissipated into a wavy sensation of relaxation. Except for my hands, which remained clenched into blue-oxygen-starved fists, the rest of my body broke into a bright fetal pig pink. Nurse Pratt focused her attention on my fists by first massaging them, then prying at them with her fingers, and finally, talking to them.

"Come now little fists, open up, the fight is over," she said.

I wanted to comply with her request, but my

hands were locked into thumbs-shut-inside-fists beyond my control. When the sweet expression on her face changed into alarm and then into panic, I recognized the final brush strokes of Immanuel. Almost on cue, Nurse Pratt screamed, lost her grip on me, and disappeared from sight. By the time Dr. Rover had plucked me from the bottom of the basin, I had swallowed enough water to remember my days packed in a sardine can.

When he placed me on my stomach on the aluminum counter and started patting my back, I caught sight of what freaked out the nurse. My fists were glowing like fluorescent baby-blue skies with identical circular patterns divided into four quadrants by silver lines dominating the surface area of each of them. Each quadrant contained a symbol of some sort. I recognized a lion and eagle, but the others were lost in a static buzz of excitement. This was too much. Granted, Immanuel had a thing for mandalas and basic renditions of the wheel of birth and death, but why should my fists become a collector's item? After so many trips to planet Earth, I was tired of the spokes, the spaces between the spokes, the hub, and the rim of the whole damn wheel. Why was it taking History so long to reach Absolute Mind?

Dr. Rover let out his own horrific scream when he spotted the flight of an eagle across my fists.

"Television screens, miniature television screens," he shouted. "This dream has gone far enough. Wake up, wake up, Dr. Rover," he continued. "Sure, I'll wake up next to my wife any

minute. Honey, can you hear me! An infant is ready to broadcast!”

He picked me up and walked around the delivery room, holding me at arm’s length and gazing into my dilated eyes.

“What kind of dream baby are you?” he asked.

My mother groaned in the background.

“My baby, I want my baby,” she said.

“In a just moment, Mrs. Murphy,” Rover said.

“Baby will be with you in just a moment.”

He walked over to the fallen nurse and held me above her.

“Nurse Pratt, wake up,” he ordered. “This is no time to be asleep on the job. Nurse, wake up and take this infant to the maternity ward. His mother requires my immediate attention.”

Nothing doing. The nurse was out cold.

Though I missed my debut broadcast, whatever it was, it was good enough to drain the blood from Dr. Rover’s face. He managed to toss me back into the water basin before joining Nurse Pratt on the linoleum floor. I settled to the bottom of it like a cosmic stone and wondered, while drowning, what purpose this quick flight into matter could possibly have for my interstellar friends. Under the circumstances, I prepared myself as best as I could for my next court appearance.

## DAY SIX

## NOTES

55. 8:15 AM

8:15 AM

atom

atomic

atomic age

atomic clock

atomic bomb

atomic energy

Atomic Energy Commission

atomicity

atomic mass

atomic mass unit

Atomic number

atomic pile

atomic reactor

atomic theory

atomic weight

atomism

atomize

atom smasher

atomy

In the Fifties, we used to crawl under our desks and cover our heads with our arms when the civil defense siren went off. Nobody in my neighborhood dug or purchased a bomb shelter. It's odd growing up with nuclear terror and to know that you're part of a species that figured out how to do this.

I think the first time I came across Einstein's infamous equation,  $E=mc^2$ , I was in the tenth grade at Catholic Central High School in Binghamton, New York. One day during Geometry class, the

smartest boy in class announced that he had written a poem. Everyone knew he was the smartest because the nun had arranged us in seats and rows according to our mathematical aptitudes. He occupied the first seat in the first row. I cowered in fear of Euclid in the fifth seat in the middle row.

The smart boy was aware of his brilliance and proceeded to chalk his poem on the board. He seemed pleased when he got to the line in which he housed  $E=mc^2$ . I mumbled something about his work not being much of a poem, which the nun picked up on with her sonar ears. She made me pay for my literary criticism. Without hesitation, she rushed down the aisle and whacked me upside-the-head with the Geometry book. She inquired, during the ringing in my ears, how I had become a knowledgeable critic of poetry. I didn't know a damn thing about Geometry, did I?

In Appendix H, I've provided an order form for my book, *White Man Appears on Southern California Beach*. The book was written during the early part of the Eighties when Reagan was President Cold War. I was a single father at the time and writing real-surreal-politically-grounded-spontaneous poetry. The *White Man* is a beautifully designed book with an original cover by the artist, Tom Haines. Mr. Haines published the book under his imprint Bottom Fish Press. A blurb on the back from Barney Bush reads:

“(His) literary courage seems to transcend the pedagogy of homemade Christianity and other

cults, shatters the American myth with the experienced eyes of the street prophets. Anyone who reads this book had better be prepared for a change of minds...and very probably life.”

It's a good book but has been generally ignored by the poetry world. You can have a copy for the price of postage. Please find a review of it by Peter Kidd in Appendix I.



## APPENDIX H

### Bottom Fish Press

Box 82, RD#2

Ingraham Hill Rd.

Binghamton, NY 13903

(607) 723-3926

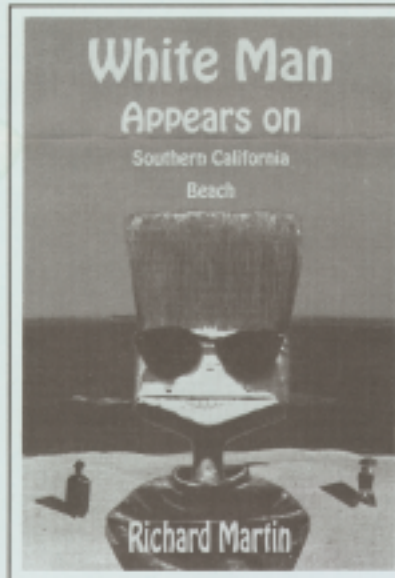


*"He has the guts to see things as they are, and the skill to transform what might be considered ugly into the necessarily beautiful."*

*Lloyd Van Brunt*

*"(His) literary courage seems to transcend the pedagogy of homemade Christianity and other cults, shatters the American myth with the experienced eyes of the street prophets."*

*Barney Bush*



*"He is the chronicler of the empty dynamism of this culture but he knows its joys too. In the fast-paced world of his verse there beats a fierce and oddly tonic heart."*

*Andrei Codrescu*

*"...notes that refuse to offer us the solace and divertissement of academic luncheons and cocktail parties, that offer us no solace at all; because solace isn't the name of this game; paying attention is."*

*Dave Kelly*

For your copy of *White Man Appears on Southern California Beach* please fill in the order form below and mail it along with check or money order to:

**BOTTOM FISH PRESS**

Box 82, RD #2, Ingraham Hill Rd., Binghamton, NY 13903

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## The Bellingham Review

Vol. 15, No. 2

Fall 1992

Peter S. Kidd

*White Man Appears on Southern California Beach* by Richard Martin, Bottom Fish Press, Rt. 2, Box 82, Ingraham Hill Road, Binghamton, NY 13903, 1991, 71 pp. \$9.95, paper.

The day I got my copy of Richard Martin's *White Man Appears on Southern California Beach* in the mail, I was headed out to the University of New Hampshire, in Durham, to do a landscape design for the Alumni Center. I put the book on the front seat of the truck, thinking perhaps I'd get a chance to look at it over lunch. Next thing I know, I'm reading this book, captured by its imaginative cover, designed by Bottom Fish Press publisher Tom Haines, travelling 70 mph down Route 101, book in one hand, steering wheel in the other. I read the first section, "More Champagne," in this manner, probably not doing it justice, with intermittent looks at the road ahead. I simply could not put it down for twenty-five miles.

Martin jumps right into it with the first poem, "By Zero":

the concern is not about salvation  
it is about breath  
the absence of fear

about the zebra that continues to visit  
the dream

the one in which the Muse  
rams her nakedness  
into the neocortex

One thing becomes apparent from the onset, that Richard Martin is an enormously sensitive person deeply concerned with the world that the children are inheriting. His many years as a school teacher and as an administrator of upstate New York artist-in-residence programs shine through his poems, often sadly as not. In "An Eleven Year Old Boy," Martin cites the tale of a child with leukemia withering away with the understanding of his classmates at school:

He dies in front of classmates day after day.  
When clumps of hair fall from his head into soup  
or onto the floor  
his friends understand.  
No one asks him to lift a bat anymore.  
He is given first base automatically.  
His ghost runner is known and accepted.

Blood thins by the hour!

The second section of the book, "White Man Appears on Southern California Beach," is one long thirteen-page poem. I must confess the first time I read the book, this title poem was a stumper for me. It rambles and is done in this drugstore-clerk persona:

### THIS IS AMERICA JACK

where anything sells  
but like a dunce you're performing simplistic tasks  
and who could or would want to enumerate these  
while another gem sinks to the bottom of your brain  
like one more body tossed into the sea  
by the Neptune Society.

After struggling with this poem, I had the opportunity to hear Martin read the poem in the Piano Factory in Boston. Just hearing Martin read the poem was an ear opener. It taught me the cadence of the piece, which is integral to it. From this point on I have understood the significance of the poem in the book. The poem has surreal touches, but the abstraction is not so abstract. It is our America and the drug culture of the Sixties that Martin and our generation has either perished from or risen out of.

The third section of the book kicks off with a poem titled "Man and the Moon":

After that they drank  
quite often together.

He would sing his wolf tunes;  
the moon would imitate  
his drunken walk  
and try to pick up ladies.

This was fine  
until townspeople grew uneasy  
of girls with moon  
on their breath  
like mouthwash.

It's this tight, clean construct I like about Martin's poems. They are accessible, and the imagery has an electricity within it that crackles.

The final poem of the fourth section is titled "After." Some lines from it:

after the long kiss and the confused hermit's tongue

.....

after the hurricane of larynx and soul

.....

after the death of prepositions and spiders dangling  
at dawn

.....

after the children stay in their childhoods

.....

after the intersections are painted with blood

.....

after the symbols for infinity are digested and expelled

.....

after

Martin's words are well chosen; his vision calls into account the American Myth and its many tragic offshoots. *White Man Appears on Southern California Beach* is by no means melancholic or desperate. Martin insists we take a raw look at our times, complete with "Pet Rocks," but his book suggests a sensibility that will survive the times. His poetry belongs to a post Post-Modern generation, one that has not had its spirit broken by the nuclear age, rather a generation who'd best take warning that we all must learn to adjust and survive like the cockroach, thrive in fact, from the pesticides and toxins and social injustices.

At a time when grants and monies have virtually dried up, Martin and Tom Haines have picked up the challenge with Bottom Fish Press and done what is right. The result is *White Man Appears on Southern California Beach*, a book that is thoughtful, heartfelt, well written, well composed, easy to read, and a sign of things to come from contemporary poetry.

## DAY SEVEN

I didn't know "memoirs" could talk, but it appears they can because this one told me that it wants to be parked like an abandoned car on the side street (that was eventually named "Jack Kerouac Alley") in San Francisco in the year 1970 AD.

When one embarks on writing one's memoir, it is appropriate to ask if there's time or value in remarking on the invisible fish in the aquarium in the living room.

Remember Mr. Peabody, that scholarly dog with black-frames glasses, who took rides into the past in his Way-Back machine with his freckly, young-boy sidekick, Sherman?

In the movie Cleopatra (L. Taylor), Mark Anthony, (R. Burton) unlike Caesar (R. Harrison), stumbled gradually into a real-passionate-crazy love for Cleo, that even induced him to jump ship during a losing sea battle with some former Roman buddies, the moment he saw Cleo's golden barge set sail for home.

I remember reading somewhere that Kafka posted the word "wait" above his writing desk and often produced little more than a half of page on a given night.

Essentially, the Self-Assessment Summary is about taking a close look at where we're at, and what we need to do to strengthen the school in the following areas: literacy focus, looking at student work, best practices, measuring student progress,

resource allocation, professional development, and parental involvement.

Man, Honey loved them spuds.

Take stock in America US Series 1 Saving Bonds.

We live in a sea of words.

The **cat** and I appreciate the time we spend sleeping in front of windows.

When the best line to start this memoir finally appears, the reader will breathe a sigh of relief before arguing with friends about the quality of the line or dashing off a highly critical or maybe even an angry e-mail to the author.

Though this seems like a game, I know next to nothing about **game theory**.

Considering how many hours most of us work, how much time is really available to spend on literature in untraditional formats that challenge the notion that **L+A=N#G%U!A^G@E** is a transparent medium with most of its meaning readily available to most readers?

Life is **absurd**.

Life is **not** absurd.

Innocence **cues-up** the Garden.

Clearing his ghostly throat, **Jeeves** said: "Not that it's any of my business, sir, but do you think making goo-goo eyes at the older woman next door will increase your chance of resuming normal sexual relations with your wife?"

I don't want to make a case that Eve's indiscretion with an apple is the cause, the underlying metaphysical event, that demands a

portion of my fleeting existence be spent carrying two-three-four hefty bags of laundry to the nearest public soapsuds emporium.

Our mission is to discover what is going on.

However, it's one thing to label "things" and quite another to label people.

With the advent of the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, the **woman's movement**, and the American Indian Movement (AIM) in the sixties, the Santa Claus-like myths of my parochial/public school education exploded in my head.

**Who made you?**

Time flies when you're in your forties.

In recent years, the restructuring wave of educational reform has attempted to address the systemic problems of our schools by proposing a host of structural reforms (site-based management, shared leadership and decision making, effective schools, school choice) as ways to affect and improve the teaching and learning process for teachers and students.

The prophet looked at what he had written.

Bring back **psychedelic** music.

56. *Seven*. Seeing that the "Days" are already in bold print, I needed to italicize seven and keep bold print to indicate that it was a note. Seven: lucky number; seven deadly sins (cardinal): pride, lust, envy, anger, covetousness, gluttony, and sloth; seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, the Holy Eucharist, Matrimony, Holy Orders, Penance, and Extreme Unction; seven(th) heaven: the furthest of the concentric spheres containing the stars and comprising the dwelling place of God and the angels in the Moslem and cabalist systems. 2. A state of great joy and satisfaction; seven year itch: scabies. Mickey Mantle wore the number seven. Seven suggested as a dynamite first name by George in one of the Seinfeld episodes. Seven seems to be a powerful number in the mind of humans. Seven in Hebrew, Greek, Egyptian and Eastern thought represents the embodiment of perfect unity. As some of the above things indicate, it is used to represent both highly positive things and highly negative ones. Seven possesses a dialectical nature. There are seven essential steps in the way my brother teaches tennis in New York City. In my unfinished novel (chunk-o-novel), I required the character to experience both the seven sacraments and the seven deadly sins. At the moment of completion of this literary assignment, dialectical mechanics would generate a synthetic explosion of new energy and light. Harmony and unity would replace the old contrarities. Blake's marriage of heaven and hell. Vallejo, in his poem,

Have You Anything To Say In Your Defense?  
...“that the Mystery joins things together. See  
poem.

#### PERSONAL TRUTH POEM

In the year of my dialectic  
I lost most of my hair  
and walked around the town  
with a light bulb in my mouth

I drank constantly

Used colored pencils to juxtapose  
graveyards with postmodern delivery rooms  
where infants crooned of oceans  
blood-red in color

In the year of my dialectic  
I swore to banish philosophies  
of light and darkness  
to celestial spheres more suited  
to multiplicities

I drank constantly

Used advanced telecommunications  
to speak with disease centers  
in my body  
overcome by holographic facts  
of cellular hysteria

(from, *Modulations*, Asylum Arts Press)

57. 1970. Covered in white van note.

58. **Way-Back Machine.** The whole notion of the  
past being accessed by a mechanical device remains  
attractive to me.

59. **Honey.** Lead and only female character in my  
story, “Shallow Man.” Published in *Fell Swoop*  
46/47, the “Look out, you oaf!” issue. See  
Appendix J for story. Appendix K to subscribe to  
the *Swoop*.

60. **cat.** My cat’s name is Edgar Allen Poe. Poe for  
short. She is now 12 years old. Presently, she’s  
asleep in the blue sitting chair in my writing  
studio. She enjoys a good sleep while I write. I  
believe in cat communication through vowel-  
sound utterances. I wrote the following poem for  
Poe. See poem.

#### CAT SOUND POEM

for Poe

SCA BA SCABA  
DEE BO DEE  
SCABA DEE BO DEE  
SCA BA LIP SKEE  
BODEE SCABA

LIP LEE LORUM  
SKEE BO DEE  
SCABA DEE BO LIP  
LEE LORUM  
SKIP A LOW GEE  
BO DEE  
SCABA DEE BO GEE  
SCA BA SCABA

**61. game theory.** The mathematical analysis of abstract models of strategic competition with the determination of best strategy as a goal, having applications in linear programming, statistical decision making, operations research, and military and economic planning. (The American Heritage Dictionary Of The English Language, p. 541).

**62. L+A=N#G%U!A^G@E.** Variation on L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E, defunct literary journal devoted to Language Poetry.

**63. absurd.** I associate this word with Albert Camus and felt pretty absurd during my early twenties.

**64. not.** Sartre makes a distinction between consciousness-for-itself and consciousness-in-itself. Consciousness-for-itself is centered in the awareness of a “lack” or a not, i.e., negation, as in the Hindu notion, that’s *not* it. Whatever happened to the existentialists, anyway? In my family *not* shifted into a proclivity to say *nah* to many, many things. As in: Would you like to take

the garbage out? *Nah*.

**65. cues-up.** Radio terminology for preparing a record or CD for broadcast. See Appendix L for story, *Amazing Things*.

**66. Jeeves.** Ghost-butler in one of my unfinished short stories. I spend a lot of time not finishing short stories. This particular one is about living in a Spider House. Things weren’t going well in the first marriage and moving into the Spider House didn’t help it. The Spider House was this old farmhouse overlooking Conesus Lake in Livonia, New York. The house was haunted by two old ghosts: the butler, Jeeves, who lived upstairs in one of the bedrooms, and a nameless female wraith who made her home in living room windows that gave us a view of the lake. I turned 30 in the Spider House and mother informed me via a long-distance call that I had given her the “hives” on the day of my birth. Recently, Jeeves has become an internet character capable of finding the answers any “netty” wants. Jeeves, get on your horse for this inquiry. “Jeeves, where may a reader order/find a copy of Richard Martin’s first book: *Dream Of Long Headdresses: Poems From A Thousand Hospitals?*” See story fragment.

#### SPIDER HOUSE

Jeeves poured me another scotch and sank back into the shadows of the room. He knew my routine. I stayed in bed on Saturday mornings

flipping through a stack of half-finished, mostly incomprehensible poems. Sometimes I found an image that sparked my interest and I shot bolt upright in bed to repeat out loud, with the sizzle and energy of a shooting star, an old image found such as: *There are no metaphors for dread.* “How about that one, Jeeves?” I’d call out. “What do you think? Should I start a new poem with that line?”

Jeeves remained silent. It was not in the specs. of his job to function as a literary critic to a hack poet. He was here to serve those of us that lived in the upstairs bedrooms of the Spider House. There were two others besides myself assigned to the upstairs bedrooms (by my wife) and they were my kids, Sam and Dave. At night, Jeeves sentried himself outside their room to protect them from the typical nightmare ghouls that flit in and out of young children’s minds. Sam and Dave liked Jeeves and, like me, spent a lot of time putting their hands and arms through the shade.

Because it was Saturday, Sam and Dave were free from preschool and already outside playing. I could hear them on their big-wheel tricycles tearing up and down the gravel driveway that wound like a fat snake from the kitchen door to the road. Sam and Dave were permitted to wheelie half-way down the driveway before turning back. This suited them well enough, and when they spun out half-way down it, they always broke into loud giggling and laughing. They were the happy ones in the house.

I wasn’t too happy and so I drank. Jeeves knew

the drinking and the flipping through my poems were just the prelude activities to my real attention for hanging upstairs in my bedroom. I had a thing for the middle-aged woman across the road who came out on sunny days to tan on the roof of her small one bedroom cottage (we lived on a lake). She usually appeared around 10:30 A.M. when the sun was in the correct position to beat down on **her beautiful body** with all the intensity of early summer. I never thought a woman in her forties could look so good in a pink-string bikini with florescent hue. But the woman from the cottage was a pure knock-out, and I was a horny toad with a scotch in my hand and a prayer on my lips to the sun whenever she stepped through her upstairs window and took her place of worship on the roof.

“Another scotch, Jeeves,” I ordered, hearing my wife downstairs calling in the kids for a mid-morning snack. Jeeves came out of the shadows and poured the drink with great civility but couldn’t resist commenting on my Peeping Tom behavior. Though specs. for literary criticism were not in his domestic contract, counseling upstairs occupants on their moral behavior seemed to register a place.

Clearing his missing throat, he said: “Not that it’s any of my business, sir, but do you think making goo-goo eyes at the older woman next door will increase your chances to resume normal sexual relations with your wife?”

67. **woman’s movement.** Some recent jazz from the



PBS book interview section of Nightly News that post-revolutionary women in the workforce feel as trapped in corporate careers as their mothers did in the Fifties as housewives. What do you think?

68. **Who made you?** First question in the Baltimore Cathecism #2.

69. **psychedelic.** request made by Charlie O'Reily in my story: Charlie O'Reily, Prophet. 6 Fell(ed) Swoop(ing), the "wrong planet" issue. Fell Swoop, The All Bohemian Review. Original cover design by my son, Joseph, at the age of six. Some kind of alien teddy-bear blasting off a planet. See Appendix M.

70. **essential.** For information on essentialtennisnewyork, contact my brother, Jim, at the Tennis Club at Grand Central Station.

71. **Language Poetry.** Check out the Electronic Poetry Center at the University of Buffalo: <http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc>. See poem.

#### THESIS

Inspired to spit scaffolding  
Nonusers  
or early users  
also benefit from a show  
of support

The internal combustion  
of time

Remember the horizon  
the ache  
of the virtual trash bin

Like you were saying  
that time  
in an open-air market

(clipping nails  
scribbling epiphanies  
on index cards)

When there's no meaning  
don't look for it

72. **Nah.** See poem.

#### FOR JIM AND NANCY

disband the schedul  
e of beautiful even  
ts into moments of  
ecstasy say no say  
yes say maybe the  
wind roars as def  
ined symphony e  
njoy the open mo  
uth of sunlight let  
machines tick into

rust the wake of s  
ea refers to mind  
all the games with  
missing pieces un  
ite your move I gu  
ess unroll the dice

**73. Hospitals.** from *Cafe Review* Interview:  
Summer 1999.

**Wayne:** Your first book of poems came directly from the experience of being a hospital orderly. Poems like *Pinkerton*, *Rachel*, *Joe*, *Room 203*... they slam into a reader's sensibility like a medicine ball hurled at the gut.

How long were you an orderly? And, were all of the poems written while you were an orderly or did some creep up on you afterwards?

**Richard:** I started working as an orderly in a hospital when I was a sophomore in high school. I have my mother to thank for that. She worked at Lourdes Hospital and thought the experience of putting on a white uniform and white shoes would shape and enhance my teenage years. So I started at Lourdes as the "cart man," which meant lugging this old metal cart around the hospital and picking up the dirty instruments and implements that accumulate in a hospital. Things like bedpans and urinals etc. It was gross and when I returned from my maiden voyage to an area in the hospital called Central Supply, I was told by the charge nurse that

it was time for me to wash all that stuff by hand. "You're kidding me," I said. "No joke," she said pointing to the big tub in which to complete the task. Part of my initiation into hospital culture was to wash this stuff without any gloves on and to trust in a disinfectant called Staphen. I did and that night on my way to the bathroom to relieve myself, I noticed that my fingernails had slid almost entirely out of their cuticles. With that experience under my belt, I remained an occasional employee in hospitals around New York State - working in emergency rooms, on geriatric floors, and with cancer patients— for around 10 years. During that time I never wrote a single poem about the place.

**74. her beautiful body.** "Sing the body electric."  
WW.

#### LOVE POEM

I sit  
the sound of tires  
lost in my brain  
bits of night  
caught in the grooves

I think of food  
of her teeth  
coming at me  
of the bite on my shoulder

The sky is like an opossum  
tossed against the window  
by the wind

\*

I drink coffee  
remember her  
rising out of a dark stream  
standing over me  
dripping on my bermuda shorts

In the morning  
picking grass dried on her back  
radio dissolves her  
claims it's cold  
she has turned to snowflakes

\*

That afternoon we walked  
to the blue herons' nests  
in the fields behind the school  
and got the idea

They call it a rookery  
she whispers  
I watch the night  
from straw breasts

\*

I walk  
one hand to my head  
like a bandage  
my thoughts are bullets  
lodged in the walls  
of my brain

Pictures hang covering  
the holes  
in one cows lie  
in the rain

In another  
I hold my balls  
as stars  
drift into her

\*

A cat and I  
stop to roll  
in stones  
beneath a street lamp

A milkweed pod  
cracked open  
on the asphalt  
its silver feathers  
waiting for wind

She begins  
to unbotton her blouse

and wait  
I think of wind

\*

Bird whistles  
full of wet green buds  
like her tongue  
curled in my mouth

I play with it  
she knows  
how I think

I leave  
her mouth  
skin hair eyes  
mixed with saliva  
evaporate  
in the dim ceiling light

\*

I cough  
dogs bark  
cat paws in still grass  
the respiration of birds  
on black leaves

I rise  
in a scent of pine needles  
the lounge chair

collects dew  
from her body

\*

My mind a spring field  
fallow for years  
horses sinking in the mud  
crickets at the edge  
like a phone off the hook  
the sound of wild flowers  
bubbling in the ground

I'm no farmer  
her breasts are hyacinths  
hugging my lips  
like apartment walls

\*

I come home  
in sunset  
a final stretch of sky  
before clocks take over

75. Rachel. See poem.

RACHEL

He had just finished telling me  
how boys (he always called those  
in the army boys) used to stick

## SHALLOW MAN

their arms through windows  
 on their way to dinner  
 and bleed to death  
 while the cook watched  
 the government stew harden into adobe brick,  
 and swore that the damn psychos  
 never made it to chow on time.

It was when he said  
 this civilian psycho job is a breeze,  
 you leaned over the side rail  
 he was adjusting  
 and bit through his thumb  
 until your teeth were like a lover's knife  
 in the bark of his bone.

Man, Honey loved them Spuds. I've been waiting to put down this line for months. I'm a dead guy now and there is a bunch of rules associated with the new place. NO WRITING was a very big one when I first got here. Seems that writing is passé in this space, at the minimum frowned upon as an inferior form of communication. My mentor, Sheila, has worked with me on telepathy and just the other day zapped the complete poems of Robert Frost into my mind. I would have preferred Stevens or Creeley, but Sheila pays little attention to my tastes. "Zap back, zap back," Sheila added in wavy thought.

*Zap back, zap back*, always with the *zap back*. "Look, Sheila," I zapped, "I'm still itchy for a pen, even a laptop (something I never cared for on earth) would be nice." I remember bitchin' to Honey: "Honey," I said. "Sure the fucking thing sits on your lap but look what happens to your hands. They become gnarly, Honey. Gnarled stone fists, do you see? Gargoyle's hands. Don't you get it, Honey? The click click click of nails on plastic keys. The ability to send text to a dozen simultaneous friends with a sweet little ASAP P.S. for their thoughts and suggestions, Honey. Then off to the electronic writing center for acceptance or rejection, Honey. Cyberspace rejections, Honey! What a freakin' bore!"

Honey killed me. After tipping the scales at 256,

she sat on my head one night while I slept. Man, she loved them spuds. Went for home fries in the morning, French fries for lunch and mashed or baked for dinner. Sometimes for a late-night snack, she made a pot of those *Instant Spuds* and scooped her way through a plate or two during Letterman or Leno. On nights we settled for a cheap pay-per-view movie on cable – something with Mel Gibson in it or Kurt Russell, two of her favorites – she had the big bags of chips: Sour Cream & Cheddar, Barbecue, and Regular to get through. Sometimes she went for the chips that came in a can. I became quite adept at tom-tomming the bottom of the can while she munched on chips. We were sort of happy, I thought, watching the surreal calamities Hollywood fed us deep into the night.

But Honey held grudges. She didn't like the comment I made one morning about her weight: "Up a few pounds from the day we met," I said. If I had had half a brain, I would have directed that comment to myself. I saw the beer belly coming into life in my mid-thirties and did nothing at first. Honey never pointed it out or left a gift certificate to a health club on my pillow. But what can I say? I broke down under the constant barrage of warnings about fatty foods, cigarettes – the whole health-kick enchilada as they say – and hit the gym. **EXCUSE ME, INCOMING FROM SHEILA:** "Not exactly, Sheila. No, I wouldn't consider myself a sexist pig. It's just what we did on earth after the Cold War; we hung out in clubs working on our quads and abdominal muscles."

Honey didn't buy into the sculpted body routine. She was a good looker to begin with and confident and happy in her full size woman's body. I was happy, too. Then the stupid comment came out. That's all she wrote. Honey doubled up on every kind of spud and loaded them down with enough sticks of butter to construct a greasy gold palace for a sleazy dignitary. She relished watching me squirm under her technique of swiping the last portion of mashers from the pot with a *stout beauty of a finger* before sucking it.

But I kept up my routine at the gym. When I started to wear half-tee shirts around the house, she just laughed. "Please, Honey," I said. "Just take a few pounds off. We're starting to look odd walking down the street together."

"Shallow man," Honey said. "Shallow, shallow man."



## APPENDIX L

### AMAZING THINGS

Dad could bounce a quarter off a freshly made bed—a discovery he made while enlisted in the Navy after perfecting the art of tight square corners when making a bed. A second class gunner during World War II, he sailed on a ship named after a state. Alaska? Alabama? My dad was the guy who ran a small black market beer and cigarette operation from the turret of one of the big guns.

I remember the lesson he gave me on the art of tight square corners. We were in the new house by then. The one on Davis Street. The one I found out years later (after he had died and the house had been sold and my mom was living with her sister in an apartment owned by their insensitive brother) was a modified Cape Cod. An odd choice of house design, seeing that “Bingo” was land-locked town. We were hours away from the nearest Atlantic beach. But he built it anyway with his hands and the help of one of his brothers. “Now pay attention,” he said, finding the right coin from behind my ear.

Drift. Sure. Thanks.

We almost made it to the Atlantic once. The family that is. During the fifties. (Saw in the paper just this morning that furniture from the fifties is extremely popular and prized by boomers with money. Every one of them (boomers) wants their moms’ vinyl kitchen dinette sets and amoeba-like sofas back in their own homes for their children to

grow up on and around.) In fact, the car was all packed, along with my brother and sister already fidgeting in the back seat. When it was my turn to climb aboard (choo-choo/toot-toot as sound effects only), I complained about feeling sick. Something in my stomach. Or a small intestinal hurricane. Too many *nestle quicks* or nerves. “Oh, Richmond,” my mom said. “You’re just a little nervous. You’ll love the ocean.”

I’m not sure what she meant. Maybe, I had expressed reservations about the sea during a private conversation with her the night before. You know around bedtime. After my prayers and getting up off my knees into bed. Possibly, a premonition that one day I would read *Moby Dick*. Feel lost in the center of it. Becalmed and opaque. Or simply tossed around. How did Olson put it: “I have had to learn the simplest things last.” (Maximus, to himself) - i.e., hand on railing when on deck in a stormy sea or something. I guess the sea was a bit too primordial for me even in the form of pictures mom showed me in our brand new encyclopedias to allay any next day trip fears.

Drift. Sure. Thanks.

*Nerd* is one way/word to describe the man who knocked on our door to sell us our first set of encyclopedias. Say the knock was an hour or so before the *Ed Sullivan Show* came on. Say in late spring. Say memory fails me. Say *nerd* is not the right word. Inappropriate. Wasn’t available in the Fifties to describe encyclopedia salesmen. How about geek-weirdo-fool? Or Joe McCarthy-



Com mies-The Arms Race? Even The House of unAmerican Activities-Testing Nuclear Bombs-on-Downwind Communities. (“Nah, the pink radiation— like a dusting of special snow— will have no effect on your children.”) I maintain to this day (despite the Internet and the happiness of information it can engender in our minds) when talking over the past with my sister or brother that the salesman had green fish eyes bottled in telescopic glasses and the nerve to splash an orange tie on a gray flannel suit. Why else would I exclaim after answering the doorbell: “Mom, there’s a nerd at the door!”

The books were lovely: white bumpy covers with black spines and gold-tinted pages. And the name: *World Book Encyclopedias* appealed to all of us. And if we bought them right now, which meant signing a contract on Sunday to pay so much a month for two years etc., he’d throw in a walnut bookcase especially designed for the 24 book set. “Yippee,” we shouted, thumbing through pages devoted to armadillos, mountain ranges, coffee bean plantations, maps and transparencies of the human body. Remember those? The perfectly formed human being as a set of overlapping transparencies that showed the bones and muscles and could highlight the viscera or the heart and its chambers in living color.

Drift. Sure. Thanks.

Which reminds me of the time my mother found me out of breath on the back porch (panting like a cat) after having just run around the house a

dozen times for no apparent reason. High-strung mommy yelled: “It’s his heart.” Because I guess I had a heart-murmur or something. But my brain viewed the encounter differently. It felt suddenly mortal and began to dwell in childish ways on mortality. Oh, nothing much at first. I would die. Didn’t leaves and bugs? Something would take me out. Then I began to place my hand over my heart to listen to and gauge its beat. Was it regular? Or irregular? How long would I last in this drama of love and solar systems? What happened to my innocence? What was innocence? Are the mental stages of human existence really innocence, good vs. evil, and faith as Herman Hesse suggested in his book, *My Belief*? Why?

Drift. Thanks. Sure.

Innocence cues up the Garden. The one with the apple tree and two beautifully new human beings. Were they similar to the trees and rocks and animals and clouds up until the bite into the apple? Were their energies structured into Oneness? Being-in-itself as noted by Sartre in his tome, *Being and Nothingness*.

Drift. Thanks. Sure.

So now it comes to that I studied philosophy as an undergraduate in the Sixties. I was a very astute philosophical thinker (tinkerer). (Here’s a line from a poem I wrote: *Philosophers claim the limousine/into existence has windows/twenty stories higher than sunlight*.) I specialized back then in wonder and awe and spent much of my time slouched in desk chairs - eyes closed beneath a Yankee baseball cap,

pondering amazing things. Once a professor of philosophy (Comparative Religion 128) kicked me in the foot while demanding that I wake up and pay attention to his musings NOW!

Drift. Thanks. Sure.

Now. Holy Cow! It's pretty cool to end a sentence and a story with Phil Rizzuto.

6 Fell(ed) Swoop(ing)



the 'wrong planet' issue!

## DAY EIGHT

I'm off-site with the memoir today. Off-site, meaning I'm not in my room or lapsed into memory yet. Today's date: March 5, 1999 and I'm sitting on a wooden bench in a hallway of the West Roxbury District Court House. The courthouse borders the Roslindale and Jamaica Plain sections of Boston. It's located just off the Riverway and is in spitting distance to Forest Hills and the MBTA orange line subway. It's called the Riverway (also Arborway) because it's a snake of a road that winds its way from Franklin Park through the Emerald Necklace park system of Boston, passing such treasures as the Arnold Arboretum and Jamaica Pond, before ending (starting) at the Fens and the Boylston Street area. Fenway Park and the Old Towne Team reside in this area. Signs posted on the Riverway declare 30 miles per hour, but it has an Indianapolis 500 personality.

Just down from the Courthouse on Washington Street is another spot of green, the Braddock Café, or as the locals call it, Doyle's Pub. Doyle's is a landmark of Irish drinking, conversation, and politics. Old-time pols, such as T. Kennedy, still wet their whistles on occasion at Doyle's. Great Guinness, ambiance, killer Bloody Marys, and high and beautiful tin ceilings tap the Irish soul into full story-telling mode. I could be heading down there after telling my story to "da" judge.

I have a 12:45 appointment to plead innocent to the charge of passing a stopped school bus on

LaGrange Street a few weeks ago. I work in the Boston Public Schools for Christ sakes. I'm an ex-teacher – blah, blah, blah. The lights on the bus were flashing yellow when I went around the thing. That's legal. And I even hesitated. Went slow. Slipped past. Nothing reckless, stupid, discourteous, or fast. (Note to Bill Gates: please read *Ulysses* by J. Joyce or any modernist text for ideas to quell the cute wavy green lines under language constructions you disapprove of. Example: "Wait. The full moon was the night we were Sunday fortnight exactly there is a new moon. Walking down by the Tolka. Not bad for a Fairview moon. She was humming. The young May moon she's beaming, love. He other side of her. Elbow, arm. He. Glowworm's la-amp is gleaming, love. Touch. Fingers. Asking. Answer. Yes." [Joyce, 1961. p.167].) Look, you can't get anywhere in the city on weekdays, if you don't go around yellow lights and through them. But the driver gave me a long blast of horn, like the red lights were flashing, even though the hydraulic bar stop sign that extends from the left, front-side of the bus when they're on, popped into my rear-view mirror after I cleared the bus.

Plus, I live in West Roxbury now, just off LaGrange Street, in a small Cape Cod my wife bought after we fled the roach estate. West Roxbury is just west of Roslindale and we live more or less up the street and across Washington from our old place. W. Roxbury is a residential neighborhood and pretty much an Irish enclave

like South Boston. It's an old, stable, and conservative neighborhood with X amount of Catholic Churches and pubs. I like it even though I'm not stable or conservative. Old, yes!

After some preliminary inquiry with a desk clerk about the exact location of the courtroom, I find a seat in the hall on a wooden bench. The place is jumping with people that have the same appointment hour as me. It looks like I'm in for a wait. But that's OK, up until now, it's been a pleasant day. An early morning meeting with one of the principals I work with went well, as did a session with my physical therapist at the Boston Athletic Club. My therapist, a saint of bad knees and backs, is a great guy, and I have great confidence in his ability to fix my sore back. My back is sore without reason. No heavy lifting, football, auto racing, still it has been stiff and sore as hell for about a month. Sitting on this bench doesn't help it and I'm a still thirsty from the workout **Rodent** (nickname of the PT) put me through and the fact that the club's spring water machine was out-of-order. I sing the mundane.

Ten minutes from the "da" judge and there are no more bench seats to be had. Folks mill about, talking about how they were screwed and will beat their particular ticket. It's a perfect March day outside – brilliant sunlight and blue sky that pour through the glass roof overhead with no trace of windy lions. I feel like a reporter, a journalist of light. March is my birth month. I was born during a blizzard in the early hours of the 13th day of

March in 1949. No snow or wind today. No dark and moody March. But light from a March sun and it's the kind of light that lets you know your vision has been muddled of late. It's a knock-knock who's there light. It's the future of light. Spring on the way, summer to follow. It doesn't flash yellow, red, or green. There's no go or stop to it. It pours in. Into the mind. A light that makes me say the Greek word, **aletheia**, under my breath. Aletheia discloses the world. It's the light that brings objects into view. It is the in the beginning light – nova light, big bang light. Light that we are and always will be. Starlight. Our basic composition. The speckled marble floors of the courthouse look good in it.

I'm at the courthouse to fight the ticket because the fine for going around a stopped school bus is 200 bucks. If I weren't here, I'd be home right now, in my room, and Day Eight of my memoir would be cruising down a different track. Take comfort in the multitude of tracks and paths available to the human being, Grasshopper. None of them are the ultimate Path. We'll never know when we're on that one. Sure, a **Taoist** idea, and it's embedded in Blake's *crooked paths and ruts of genius*, though it might be fun to lift the "i" out of genius.

In the shower this morning, I thought of opening Day Eight of my memoir with the opening lines from three of my favorite books. Not a bad gambit I thought covered in suds – an atonement for not opening my memoir with the line I'll lay out here in a few more days. The books:

*Notes From the Underground* by F. D; *Tropic of Cancer* by H.M; and *Moby Dick* by H.M. How could I go wrong with these guys? But there was not enough time to find the books. Plus too much work. The ticket. And with nothing to do at the courthouse but wait, my life story ('cause at this point I'm still into consecutive days) would have to continue here or my attempt at consecutiveness would end.

The crowd around me is restless now and their talk turns to the justice system. How it makes you wait. Gets you frustrated. Tries to wear you out. A few people stare at me while I'm writing. What am I writing for? What am I writing about? As for my ticket, I didn't get pulled over by a cop or even see one at the point of my alleged infraction. My ticket came through the mail a few days after the incident. **Citizen's arrest!** Citizen's arrest! by the bus driver taking my plate number and calling it into the police. My wife said that I'd probably beat it if I took the time to show up at the courthouse. No police. "The bus driver won't show up," she said.

Time. It's amazing how old it is and no matter how long we've been around and part of it, we still feel like there is never enough of it. Surprisingly, I feel calm. Like I'm not wasting my time. This has not always been the case. For years, I've been plagued by a hatred for waiting. I'm no Godot. I'm **the man who hates to wait**. Once I darted from a Chinese restaurant with my family in tow because the service was too slow. I never wait for diner

food. I used to snap my fingers a lot to indicate displeasure with a time-flow. "Keep it moving," my dad always said. We ate our food fast. Gobbled it, like we had to get some place. Fast. Get there fast! My kids started calling me *the man who hates to wait*. Then breed – a guy easily frustrated by stupid and pointless things (from an old Charles Bronson movie). A guy who gets red in the face and is prone to yelling when life's little frustrations nip him in the ass. Once I got detention in high school for not sitting down in my seat fast enough after the opening classroom prayer. I spent a millisecond smoothing out a wrinkle in my sweater. Too much time. Foul. Detention, buddy-boy. And now all these instantaneous communications (emails) and get back to me with your answer before I even send you my question, you lout. But, I'm calm. Still water – not exactly at fifty. But better, much better, especially with my gal, Aletheia, kissing my thoughts.

Moo! The **herd** is moving on voice command into the courtroom and I'm one of the herd. It's really a lovely courtroom, with lights enclosed in opaque glass cylinders and suspended from long chains attached to a high ceiling. A church of law with wooden pews that sends my mind back to **St. Patrick's Church** in **Binghamton, NY**. On your knees, boy. Pray, son.

With these thoughts in mind, I rise with the herd and solemnly swear to tell the truth. The judge will see us in alphabetical order. M is the 13th letter of the alphabet.

The truth is I've had few run-ins with law during my life. I know cops are tough and try my best to stay out of their way. Years ago, while living and teaching in Avon, New York, a few things happened. Nothing big. A parent complained to the principal that she saw me peeing on a tree in her yard. The police checked out the incident and even showed up at the school. Parents disdain fourth grade teachers peeing on trees in broad daylight. That's what she said: peeing in broad daylight. One of the cops that checked out the alleged incident used to live next to us (first wife and kids) and though he suspected I smoked pot, didn't believe I had a compulsion and/or urge for peeing on trees – especially in front of a house just three doors down from the school. When he learned that I was on a leave of absence from the school and not living in town, he dropped the investigation. I never found out about it until I returned to school and the principal told me about the fiasco. When I asked him if he came to my defense, he hesitated, and then said that he wouldn't have put it past me. I was a poet, wasn't I?

Then, of course, there was the roast beef incident. (If you remember from my flash fiction, "Lenny and Sarah as Sentences," trying incidents in my life may involve one of the various forms of roast beef.) In this instance, a friend and I were dragged out of a restaurant – The Big Tree in Geneseo, New York – in cuffs, and slammed head first onto the hood of a police cruiser for supposedly uttering the word *fuck* while in

conversation and waiting for our roast beef dinner.

It's hard to know or remember which words are used in conversation while waiting for a roast beef dinner. Though I don't remember either my friend or me saying *fuck* while waiting for the beef, an older gentleman at an adjacent table definitely heard it and leaned over into our conversation with the admonition to clean up our "talk." He was having a quiet and appropriate dinner with his old wife. (The judge is up to Diaz.) Due to some excellent peripheral vision on my part, I had noticed just how quiet and appropriate the dinner was: chew and stare, chew stare, etc. When I told the "geezer" that he'd make better use of his time *small talking* with his wife rather than poking his sensitive ears in our conversation, he said: "We'll see about that." And with a snap of his fingers, the bartender, two waiters, and a busboy surrounded our table. We were asked to leave or suffer the **consequences their muscles** would offer. I protested. "Wait a minute," I said. "What about the beef? **Where's the beef?**" My inquiry got us yanked out of our chairs, bummed-rushed to the door, and thrown out onto the street like a couple of stuntmen in an old western. There was nothing we could do, except to pick up our sorry asses off the ground, brush off the dirt and street pebbles, and make our way to the Idle Hour.

Idleness has never been a popular state for a religious person or those trying to get ahead in life – in particular – in America. Sure, the rich are idle enough and play their games in front of us on TV

and in the movies or behind our backs in corporate boardrooms. Sure, they have to test drive an elephant through the eye of a needle, but who cares about them? For the rest of us, who could use some idleness, the goal remains to keep busy, be productive, industrious, hard-workers, on task, reliable, efficient, risk-takers, accumulators, on time, on schedule, on target, whistlers while we work, dutiful, place-holders, part of the great machine, aggressive, tense, and fearful. There's no time for lolly-gagging, goofing off, smoking a joint, settling back, and kicking the shoes off. None of this is allowed because we'll fall behind, lose the race, and become, if nothing else, victims of the devil's play. And if that happens we'll be back in the Garden (somehow), back to square one, before the vale of tears and toil, before the utopia envisioned by Marx once we got the hang of distributing **wealth**. Yeah, the Idle Hour was the perfect dive bar to consider beef and injustice and all this other stuff.

Call my friend Ishmael (just kidding). Call the Idle Hour dusty, dirty and full of smoke. Once the main hang-out for students at the local state college, it had defaulted into an older townie crowd with the change in the drinking age went from eighteen to twenty-one. Ish and I made our way to the end of the bar and ordered a couple of *cold ones*. But before the amber nectar had the chance to assuage our bumps and bruises, two of Geneseo's finest burst into the bar looking for the perpetrators of the beef crime.

They had done their homework. I surmised that their small hand-held notebooks contained our description: Caucasian, average height, one dressed in reggae colors, the other, accountant-like, mealy-mouthed with flashing eyes, hazel, with orange sparkles. They were resplendent in the genetic garb of Mutt and Jeff. Flashing attitude, they approached us. Jeff did most of the talking.

"Youse the guys that skipped the Big Tree before paying your bill?" he said.

"Whatcha mean by youse?" I said. "We never got a skipped meal."

"Cute," Jeff said. "Ain't he cute, Mutt?"

"Whatcha you mean by ain't?" Mutt said.

Jeff glared at Mutt and then back at us. He continued.

"Cough up the dough now, sweeties, or we're taking you in."

"Whatcha mean by in?" Ish said.

Jeff broke into an edgy smile. Mutt looked thirsty for a beer. The bartender took a deep breath and looked through the front window. The neon Bud sign in it was down a quart of neon. A patron needed change for the jukebox.

"**Listening to the crack of doom on the hydrogen jukebox,**" I said.

"The slammer," Jeff said.

"A person who performs poetry for points in front of an audience," Ish said.

We seemed confused. Unreal. Stilted. Made-up. Country blared out of the box. We were sad, unloved, and needed to patch things up. To get on



with our lives.

“Pay us now or you’re coming with us,” Jeff said.

It was tense. Go time. Ish and I took sips on our beers, set them down gently, and reached for our wallets. Not shots rang out. The officers left with the dough and we ordered a couple of beers. A couple of ladies smoking unfiltered Camels winked at us like green lights to approach their table. The night was cliché.

It didn’t take long for the women to figure out at least one of us was a married hombre. Besides after a few more beers, Ish and I were hungry. Ravenous. So back over to the Big Tree Inn we went to collect our doggie-bag meals.

We entered the restaurant with a pretty good buzz on but were discerning enough to realize that the same people that had kicked us out before were willing to do it again. Plus, they had some new recruits. Dog soldiers willing to enter a fist-for-all, if necessary, and for the hell of it, with the dirty-mouthed sidewinders in town.

Seeing that, I leaped out of the western motif into a gangland, mobster sensibility.

“Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhh,” I said, jutting my jaw and scratching my chin with my fingers. “We waaaant our roast beef dinners put in doggie-bags, capeesh!” On cue, Robert Stack and Rico flew into the restaurant. They had their handcuffs out and ready to snap on our wrists when I noticed the soft candlelight from the elegant tables reflected in them. Before I could point out this aesthetic ornament to Ish, he kicked the cuffs from Rico’s

hand. Big mistake. They went flying across the room, jumping tables like a metal rock. Heigh-ho Silver (oops), the sound of breaking crystal filled the room.

We were jumped on by those with an inclination to jump on the mob. Pushed and shoved into the street, cuffed, we were spread-eagled with our heads shoved into the hood of the police car. The word *fuck* had got out of hand. I shivered when the dialectical effect of cold November air and hot metal hood registered in my brain. I lost my Italian accent. I was an accident.

Another cop car in full siren roared into the scene. Back-up. But this was no local cop but a trooper. Within seconds, the stoic face of the trooper angled its way into my face. The black-eyed stare of the trooper shot into my eyes. Stack and Rico gave him room.

“Your side of the story,” he ordered.

“I said *fuck* before the beef arrived,” I said.

“That’s right,” Ish said. “One of us did.”

The trooper had the information he needed. He barked at Stack and Rico to get the cuffs off us.

“I told you two before that you’re not a private security force for the restaurant,” he said. “These are American citizens.”

The trooper turned to us and told us to beat it. And we did.

## NOTES

76. **Arnold Arboretum.** 265 acres of hardy trees, shrubs, and vines. Grounds planned and designed by Charles Sprague Sargent and America's first landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmstead. Part of Boston's Emerald Necklace. 4000 kinds of woody plants.

77. **Rodent.** Rodent is my physical therapist and one of the few people I trust with my body. I met him in 1987 after I blew out my knee at a poetry reading. Rodent loves this fact. He works on some real professional jocks with serious interests in hockey, mountain climbing, and other sports. He didn't realize that poetry was a contact sport until we met. I'm a real antihero of his.

I blew my knee out by assuming the lotus position after introducing Barney Bush and Jerome Rothenberg at Swats. My usual seat in the back was taken and with a large crowd in the house for the event, I hit the floor but failed to attain lotus form. Ouch! The right medial meniscus cartilage in my right knee split into two pieces. Of course, I didn't realize that as I collapsed back into my girlfriend's arms. After the reading, I was in considerable pain but managed to drink beer and hobble around among the guests at a poetry bash at a friend's house. A few days later I was fitted for crutches in the Emergency Room after **X-rays** were taken, and I was told by an ER doctor that I had strained the ligament on the right side of my knee.

But it wasn't ligament damage. It was torn cartilage and once my right quadricep muscle withered away, an orthopedic man made the correct diagnosis. I needed arthroscopic surgery. No more just ripping the knee open. Now the bone guys had tiny tools that could fit into tiny holes drilled in the knee. A brochure on the procedure showed happy patients back at the bowling alley and on the tennis courts in just six weeks after the procedure. I didn't get a kick out of the doc saying to the nurse *which knee are we doing* just before knocking me out with some gas. Docs scare me.

### (KNEE TALE INTERRUPTUS I)

(It's important for me to interrupt my *knee tale* with the following information. I'm not sure if my memoir up to now adequately portrays how tough I actually am. I want the reader to understand this fact. Please note that just after the actual tear at the reading and prior to the actual operation about three weeks had passed by. During that time, I moved my future wife to Boston and into the triple-decker we eventually lived in for nine years before the roach event. She needed to be in Boston by the beginning of June to start a new job as an entry-level accountant at Price Waterhouse. She had a thing about working for a big eight firm in a big city and told me so the day she moved in with me a year before. She's a workhorse and during our first year together finished up a Masters in Accounting and a MBA while working full time at

Eddie's Wine and Liquors. She moved in with me just at the time my kids (due to a joint custody agreement) had to move back with their mother and my mother had lost her fight with cancer. It was a tough time and summer. I was very unsure about hooking up with her even for a short-term. But she had a way with words. "Look," she said. "I'm out of your life in a year anyway, bub, so relax and try to enjoy yourself. You've got yourself a young, good-looking babe.")

(KNEE TALE INTERRUPTUS 2)

(Before I continue with the above **parenthesis** I need to interrupt it with this one. Parenthetical thought is key to a quotidian memoir such as this one. Look, it's just the eighth day of writing my memoir and I'm full of doubt. I've always been full of doubt. In this case, my doubt has to do with whether or not I'm getting off track in my life's tale by making too many parenthetical comments. Not about whether I'm a good person or not. I have options. I could quit writing the thing. I've done that before. Writing and jobs. Or I could turn on the news, watch the weather channel for awhile and feel a bit more secure. The weather channel is a great security blanket. I like to watch it raining on the country and/or sunning on the country. Weather facts make it easier to go on with life, don't you think? Low tide...high tide. Once you get that down, you get the picture. Proceed.

Prior to actually hooking up with my girlfriend,

my friend and publisher, Tom Haines, invited me to spend some time with him in Paris. He was in Paris during the summer of 1986 restoring an old mansion in a town called L'Etang de Ville, just outside of Paris. Tom is a genius of renovation and repair and he had met a mysterious woman - Madame D - in Washington the previous year while painting houses in DC. Madame D worked at the French Consulate and offered French lessons on the side. Tom became one of her students and when she became aware of his skills, she made an enticing offer to him. In exchange for some renovation work on the old family mansion she owned in L'Etang de Ville, she would instruct him in the wonders of French cuisine and introduce him to various and important artists in Paris (oh yeah, Tom is a great artistic talent too).

Tom took Madame D up on her offer and went to Paris. When I received his invitation in the mail, I felt a trip might help me in adjusting to my mom's death and my kids moving in with their mom. Serendipitously a Visa card came in the mail on the same day Tom's letter arrived. In the eighties, junk-bond banks actually sent poor slobs like me credit cards in the mail. This one had a four hundred dollar limit which provided enough unearned dough to immediately quit my job at BOCES and connect with an airline that just happened to have a round-trip ticket to Paris for that price. Bingo, I was hooked on credit. Bingo...Bingo...Bingo...and Bingo was my name, O. When I told my new girlfriend about my

decision to fly off to Paris, she stuck her last 86 bucks into my shirt pocket, gave me a big kiss, and told me to go.

Madame D turned out to be a whack-job. When I got to Paris, Tom was working on and staying at the old mansion with her, living off an endless pot of lentil soup with a purple tinge to it. There hadn't been any French cuisine lessons and no artist introductions, at least for the first five weeks of his residency. As he pointed out the red poppies in bloom along the roadside on our way into Paris from Orly Airport in a cab, he filled me in on the situation. In addition to being nuts herself, she had a crazy son (near our age) staying in the mansion with her. She feared that he might take his own life and asked Tom to watch him on the days she took off to Paris to shop with one of her friends. Her son went by the initial G and G's daily concern and obsession had to do with the purchase of fresh French bread for the day and the two bottles of red wine he required to go with it. G wore green-tinted sunglasses around the house, had a case of the shakes, and pretty much stayed in his pajamas and slippers. He took an immediate dislike to me when he found out that I was not here to work on the house and wrote poetry in my spare time.

#### (TOOL INTERRUPTUS)

(I'm not a handy man. Anytime I've tried to fix something with tools or participate in a project with someone using tools, I've failed miserably.

Though I come from a long-line of carpenters, I'm a dud with a stud and capable of inflicting bodily harm on anyone working around me when I have a tool in my hand. Tools are slippery. Once when I was trying to prove to myself that I could work with electric tools, I almost took off a foreman's head with a nail gun after his demonstration of how the thing worked. I was in my early twenties at the time, and still had the compulsion to walk on housing sites and offer my skills as a no-nothing carpenter-wannabe(e). The guy I almost killed gave me a chance after I pleaded ignorance, pedigree, and a desire to learn. I was a few months into my first marriage and felt guilty over that fact that my young wife was working in a meat-packing plant while I stayed at home reading Russian novels after dropping out of Audiology school. It was the dead of February in Rochester, New York, when I walked on the site to reclaim once and for all my genetic heritage. The hell with the Russians and their fucking samovars. Well, I didn't realize the kick a nail gun has to it and fearful of losing my balance on the carpenter horse, the gun went flying out my hand after an attempt at nailing a ceiling brace in the basement of a new house. The gun just missed taking off the guy's head and landed on the concrete floor (dented and ruined) fifteen feet from my test site. That was it. I was called an idiot for a considerable length of time and then made my way back to Fyodor.

I've gotta blame my perfectionist dad for this. He never had much patience with me when he was

fixing things around the house. In fact, after perceiving that his son lacked the fix-it gene, he put a basketball in my hands, told me to get the hell out of the house and learn to play basketball. I remember the nice Super K Bob Cousery autographed ball he gave me just before his head exploded with my incompetence. The ball didn't last too long. My first day at the park some older guys stuck a knife into it and told me to get the hell out of the park.)

When we arrived at the mansion, Tom explained bathroom facilities consisted of inside outhouses and that unfortunately one of them shared a wall with my bedroom. After a long trip and the tiredness in my bones, I didn't think this would present too much of a problem (who am I kidding, **Jocasta**), but it did. Though my quarters were as striking and authentic as a room painted by Van Gogh, everything was covered with a two-inch layer of dust. The smell inside the room was horrendous. Historic defecation and modern chemicals. I gagged and coughed while Tom opened the first bottle of wine and said that he probably should have mentioned the living conditions in his invitation. I chugged and slugged the red wine down until the dust balls and webs floating in the room took on a calm and ghostly presence. After the second bottle, I nodded to Tom that I was OK with the sleeping arrangements. Sometime during a dream about a French maid introducing me to Apollinaire, Madame D brought me back to a startling consciousness by

running through the room and screaming like a banshee that no one in her household was allowed to close a door. Madame D has a set of lungs on her, and I sat on the edge of the bed listening to high screeching sounds invade the rest of the house. With a dull ache in my head, I thought about the **Postman** Rouen and waited for the break of day.

The next morning I kicked around the digs watching Tom spackle walls and talk with enthusiasm and amazement about the ancient house. He said that the living room had once been an inside corral for the farm animals. "No kidding," he went on. "Where you're having your coffee use to be the home of pigs and goats. "What did they keep on the outside," I asked. Tom flicked some spackle on me and told me to lay a new poem on him. I retrieved my folder of new poems from the bedroom and did as he asked:

THE USE OF *of* AND THE (') IN  
TREATMENT OF THE MENTALLY  
DERANGED

These ghosts we think we are

This perfume of barren trees I smell

The magic skulls filled with ink

And stars

Scattered among dead dogs

## MEAN WHAT?

When a face looks into a mirror

Tiny lovers surface in the blood of the eyes...

So sweet their breasts and lymph nodes  
Their fluorescent concern and potato odor  
Their passion for bathing in the seabrain  
Of instinct

Sure

The sun shines

And plutonium shoes trod the chalk line of  
demons

But is this enough

To consider substance/essence  
A mirage of teeth & coffee stains

Enough to banish

A kiss to the edge of extinction

Won't we still need those

Who crawl through time's intestines  
Decorated with feather and paint  
The drums of sinners implanted in their ears...

The faithful orgasm of sky & earth

Attached to nerves blue with worry  
And sorrow

Maybe

It's been going on for a long time  
The discussion revolves  
The salt never leaves the tongue  
The caves are crowded with hermits

Should we fly off into the night  
Gather the wind's acorns  
Into lungs collapsed by hands

Grasping the mystery  
The disembodiment  
The laughter  
The Ice

The gold of spirit

Unknown to me G stood behind me as I read Tom the poem. He didn't like what he heard and scooted around in front of me after the reading of it. In a voice with considerable irritation he said into my face: "Who will buy the bread and wine today? There must be bread and wine. Who will buy it?" To placate him, I raised my hand and said that I would. That it would be an honor.

My vacation and respite were underway. It lasted for three weeks and included a 10-day tour of Ireland. When I returned from my odyssey,

Penelope moved in with me and wore tight-fitting one-piece bathing suits around the house. About ten months later, I took out my knee at the poetry reading with her by my side.

#### JUMP CUT

#### TO DIALOGUE BETWEEN ME AND MY IDIOT DOCTOR AFTER SURGERY.

A few days after having being “scoped,” I had a large and rotting cantaloupe to deal with instead of a right knee. The knee was gone or at least hidden under a pulsating gob of orange flesh. The swelling in the knee was bad enough to convince my right foot (due to the lack of blood flow) to pick a favorite crustacean dish of mine and resemble it. I like a good size lobster and now had a three-pound beauty to try to fit into a sneaker. Walking without crutches was out of the question, so on the day of my post-op visit to Dr. Bone, I hobbled into his examining room on them. I waited. With nothing better to do than to count cotton swabs, I began to examine my conscience. Why not? Priests and doctors grew up in my mind connected, and they both had their work cut out for them with me. I was a full time patient of body, mind, and spirit. I was union. I worked weekends and overtime on the here and now and what was after the here and now. In high school I drank *fat milkshakes* to put weight on my skinny corporeal body and read the Bible and memorized Latin prayers and phrases for my spiritual one. I was surrounded by saints, palm,

candles, chants, ejaculations, rosaries, holy medals, holy roses, holy water, and scapulas at the supper table and in my room. I had a penchant for making general confessions and felt a general heaviness in my soul. I prayed a lot, felt guilty for things, but longed for a brighter view. I had a sense of wanting to sacrifice my life to God. I was hemmed in with metaphysics and shy when it came to girls. So what had I done lately to deserve a botched arthroscopic procedure on my right knee? Nothing of course. But it’s hard to shake a retribution motif. Hard to believe that God is maybe not all that interested in watching and being aware of every little move a person makes. So went the examination. I returned to counting cotton swabs and made it to one hundred before an associate of Doctor Bone’s entered the room.

This guy looked like he had been hatched in a military compound or school. *Attention* came to mind as my eyes bounced off his chiseled demeanor. Yes sir, no sir, and a marching band paraded into my thoughts. He gave me a heartless stare with his steel-gray eyes, scratched a granite chin with a polished nail, and barked out his first command.

“What are you using crutches for?” he said. “We fixed you.”

“Fixed me,” I said. “I don’t think so.”

“Drop the crutches and let me see you walk,” he ordered.

“Aren’t you missing something, doctor?” I said. “Look at my knee. It’s a damn cantaloupe. And

what about my foot? Take a look at this thing.”

I kicked off my sneaker and showed the red blob of it to him.

He gazed at it and said, “Do you have gout?”

“Gout,” I said. “Gout? My foot wasn’t like this before the operation.”

“Swelling, a little constricted blood flow,” he said. “Now walk.”

I put down the crutches and walked across the floor dragging my right leg like I was hauling a bunch of two-by-fours up a steep grade. I was Peg-leg Pete. Festus.

“I want to bowl,” I said. “I want to play tennis.”

“And you will,” he said. “You will.”

He grabbed his chart, wrote something on it, and began backing up and out the door. The exit routine. How many times have I seen that? I was helpless.

“What about the swelling?” I said. “What do I do for all this swelling?”

But he was already out the door. I grabbed my crutches and hobbled to the door. I saw him disappear into another room. I screamed:

“HOW WILL I CLIMB THE STAIRS OF A TRIPLE-DECKER IN BOSTON?”

A faint reply came back to me.

“Go up and down stairs like a coward.”

The next day I drove to Rochester and picked up my kids for their summer with me in Boston. Without the slightest regard for my knee, I drove straight to Boston from there in 95-degree heat

and without air-conditioning in a standard make Toyota Tercel. A Tercel, by the way, that had black-vinyl seats. When I got to Boston, I opened the yellow pages and found the Rodent by closing my eyes and letting my finger come to rest on the physical therapist of its choice.

**78. aletheia.** Greek word for truth.

**79. Taoist.** I edited the 14/15 edition of *Fell Swoop: The All Bohemian Review*. In that issue a Binghamton friend, Tom Kolpakas, translated the poems of Lao-Tsu into the common speech and thought patterns of those living in the first ward of Binghamton, New York. See Appendix N.

**80. Citizen’s arrest.** Gomer used to make them on the Andy Griffith Show.

**81. the man who hates to wait.** Guilty as charged.

**82. herd.** Nietzschean term for people.

**83. St. Patrick’s Church.** I grew up in that parish. Went to school at St. Patrick’s Academy. Source for my story *Christian Soldier Academy*. See Day 18.

**84. Binghamton, New York.** Hometown. Born there on March 13, 1949.

**85. peripheral.** I worked on my peripheral vision all through grade school and high school so I could



become a better basketball player. Peripheral vision is the necessary tool of an excellent point guard. I don't use that much peripheral vision any more. However, I notice that I can see "floaters" out of the corner of each of my eyes. Just last night I mistook one of them for a mosquito and took a swat at it with the book I was reading.

See Poem.

#### PERIPHERY

Here take my commitment to these words  
and buy yourself a new shirt. You  
look tired and haggard after the rough ride  
from point A to point B. Yes, I wanted  
countries as much as a dictionary  
to pursue my studies. At the moment  
I've returned to a number of introductions  
in some impressive anthologies  
to calculate the weight and volume of words.

I could do things like this all day.  
Make little machines I mean.  
Machines that will talk to you if  
you want. Machines that will  
scoot across the floor at formal dinner parties  
and act up when the buzzer of discontent  
releases its magic potion.  
Of course, I'm serious - a long time ago  
I worked on my peripheral vision.

Charming. You look absolutely charming

in your new shirt. This is no doubt a time  
of complete exhilaration. A time  
to continue to make up the next new  
venue. As we say in the trades: Response  
Response Response. Don't forget to rewrite.  
And if the readers aren't here to read this  
how will they stop the mechanism of chance  
we now assume once we communicate.

**86. consequences their muscles:** Various threats to my person by those with muscles have occurred at different times throughout my life. Once on a visit to Penn State, just around the time I wrote *White Man Appears on Southern California Beach*, I was threatened with physical abuse by a thick-necked air head in a local bar. The air head took issue with the way I was dressed: LA Dodgers (blue) baseball cap, long hair, mirror shades, and a multicolored serape I had purchased on recent trip to LA, which included a stop in Tijuana. I was in the bar with a friend of mine polishing off a case of Rolling Rock (which helped to settle some acid taken early that morning after the first reading ever of the White Man.) Not that much into college football, my friend and I ignored the big game and after the reading headed for a local bar. The incident occurred after the game when the bar began filling up with look alike thick-necked air heads. Seeing me leaning up against the bar in my screaming attire, one of the air heads approached me. He engaged me in conversation.

“I thought we threw your type out of here years ago.”

(no response from me)

“Who do you think you are anyway, Clint Eastwood?”

(my response)

“If I were Clint, you’d know there’d be a gun pointing right at you through my multi-colored serape that I picked up in Tijuana during my last trip to LA, punk.”

(air head’s pupils constrict. He can’t see my eyes. Only his thick-necked head reflecting back to him)

“Hey, this guy is all right.” (sorta the line from Repo Man)

(air head approaches to put arm around me)

“Let me buy you a beer.”

(air head’s buddies start to crowd around me)

(my response)

“Hands off, punk.”

(air head takes a step back)

I finish my drink. Nod to my friend it’s time to go. We casually exit the bar. Then run for our lives up the street. See that *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* is playing.

Once inside we joined the audience in screaming:

“Where’s your fucking neck?”

**87. Where’s the beef.** From an old Wendy’s commercial.

MESSAGE FROM AUTHOR:

I understand that this section of notes has become lengthy and laborious. But there is a surprise coming up for the reader. Please bear with me for a few more notes.

**88. wealth.** See poem.

#### FLUKE OF INSOLVENCY

This morning (meaning any random morning)

The world awoke without money

During the night (meaning any random night)

The money disappeared from the face

Of the earth

Though the face seemed more radiant

A world without money

Was hard to swallow.

Those who had gone to bed with their pockets  
full

Of the stuff

Found not a single coin

When they awoke. Most panicked

When they discovered homes and cars

Were devoid of the signs and symbols

That provided the feeling

Objects were worth something.

Now they weren’t sans explanation.

A few unlucky souls began to see

The trees, rocks, and minerals

Their things were made of

And took sick; some died on the spot

When they caught a glimpse of something  
mysterious  
And unattached to the concept  
Of value. It was a tough morning  
For personal ownership. Those who scurried  
To banks to check on life savings  
Were dismayed to find fields of tall wild flowers  
Had replaced financial institutions.  
In the fields were birds of every color and beak-  
shape  
Busy at breakfast. It was a horrible day  
Of the brightest light.  
The people cried in the freshest breeze:  
Our stocks and bonds have become the clouds  
Above our heads. Oh, it sickens  
Us to see how white  
And innocent they appear. Without a doubt  
It was the greatest upheaval in a long time  
With a few old minds  
Comparing it to the big bang  
Of Adam's rib.

**89. listening to the crack of doom on the hydrogen jukebox.** From *Howl* by Allen Ginsberg. Besides being tossed from the Big Tree Inn, I had soup there many years ago with Ginsberg and Dave Kelly.

**90. X-rays.** I caught **mononucleosis** the day I turned 40. The doctors in Boston all told me I had the flu, even after weeks of eating Tylenol like candy and having a nasty case of the sweats. Each time I went into the emergency rooms around the

area, they took a chest x-ray. My lungs were always clear, but they kept taking pictures of them and I was so out of it with the sweats, I let them. Really bad flu that kept repeating. Keep on the Tylenol. Eventually, my **sister** convinced me to return home to Binghamton so our family doctor could take a look at me. I flew out of Boston like a ghoul. Emaciated and sweating, I took my seat on the plane. Some people offered me their peanuts. I started to change in out and out of cloud formations: Buckets of sweat...buckets of sweat... The high-fever was also taking a toll on my rational mind. I kept asking the stewardess how the train had lifted off the ground. "Choo-choo," I said.

My sister and her husband retrieved me at the airport. "My god," my sister said upon seeing me and the condition I was in. We drove straight to the doctors from the airport. We checked in at the desk and took our seats. But before my family doctor could get his hands on me, one of his technicians had to draw blood from my arm. She was a tall and lanky young woman with some interesting things to say to me as my blood leaked into her test-tube. She asked me if I had gazed at the sky and seen the **Aurora Borealis** the night before. "The sky was green, man," she said. "Just like when you're tripping."

Dr. R. told me he was glad to see me. He shook my hand and asked me to hop up on the examining table. He was a meticulous and a handsome man and prone to wear wing tips on most occasions. He

listened to my heart, thumped my chest and abdomen with his fingers, had me stick out my tongue, looked into my ears with his light scope, and tested by reflexes with a small rubber hammer. "Stop taking the Tylenol," he said. "I want to see what happens to your fever."

My sister and her husband drove me to their house and installed me in the upstairs guest room. Later that evening they found my eyes had rolled back in their sockets when they came into check on me. The fever had spiked to over 104. They rushed me to the hospital but there was some difficulty getting past the admissions clerk. She needed my insurance plan number. I mumbled, drooled, and slumped in the wheelchair an orderly had placed me in after seeing my condition. Eventually, my brother-in-law got pissed and told the lady that maybe when I returned to consciousness I would be able to recall the number for her.

I was wheeled into an elevator and taken to one of the rooms on the third floor. Nurses immediately plugged an IV into my arm and took my blood pressure. But I was on to them. I woke up suddenly and grilled them about the IV bag. Was it the right one? How did they know? They gave me the typical assurances that it was the right bag. That it would do me good. To be on the safe side, I asked my sister to call me at 3:00 in the morning to make sure I was still alive and getting the right bag. I didn't trust the night shift. What if they had been out drinking before coming to work? What if they smoked a joint before punching in on

the time clock?

The next day Dr. R on early rounds woke me to announce that I had mono. An odd thing for a 40-year-old man to get. But possible, etc. Right after that, another doctor came in and examined by heart and lungs. I guess I had complained of some chest pain to Dr. R the day before, and he sent over a heart man to check me out. He ordered a chest x-ray for me after thumping on my chest and listening to my heart with his stethoscope. "No more x-rays," I said. "What do you mean by that," he said. "I've had enough of them," I said. "If you want to see one, call up Boston, have them send one down."

He got right in my face and said:

"You could have a 1000 x-rays taken in a single year and they wouldn't hurt you a bit."

"Nurse," I screamed. "Oh, Nurse!"

## X-RAYS (STAND-UP)

I've been fighting off dental x-rays for some  
time.

When I first came to Boston, I made this known  
to the very first dentist I went to.

But he didn't buy it.

He had a special on

That included a cleaning, x-rays, and an  
examination.

He was adamant about the special

And need for x-rays

Even after I pulled a perfectly good set of bite x-rays from my pocket.  
Remember those  
Bite x-rays—  
little cardboard films you had to crunch down  
on with your jaws.  
First the right jaw then the left.  
Not all that comfortable.  
Bite x-rays are nothing this guy said.  
They show me nothing.  
We have a machine here that revolves around  
the head  
And takes a real nice picture of the lower half of  
your skull.  
What could I do?  
The next thing I know I'm biting on a plastic  
straw  
with my chin resting on chin rest and staring at  
a wall  
with some machine rotating around my head,  
zapping me.  
Of course the damn thing knocks the lead coat  
I'm wearing off my shoulders.  
Right to the ground it goes.  
Does the machine recognize this?  
No!  
Does it stop?  
No!  
In a bit of a panic I call out:  
'HEY, THE LEAD VEST JUST HIT THE  
GROUND!!'  
Not that easy to do while biting on a plastic

straw.  
No response from anyone.  
Every single person in the office is in the bunker  
by now.  
Unable to hear a damn thing.  
"The lead vest fell off me.  
What about the fucking vest!"  
Now right into the poem.

### Background Radiation

Each time I tell my dentist  
I prefer no X-rays of my mouth,  
he asks if I fear background radiation  
and goes on to say:  
"Rocks and buildings take constant snapshots  
of the bones."  
I instruct him to fill  
what he can see  
and to leave the unseen to its twisted ways,  
adding with emphasis:  
"Physicists have *never* set a threshold  
on how much radiation the body can absorb."

He persists his work requires a view  
beyond the naked eye,  
to be reasonable  
and to follow him into an adjacent room  
where a new machine orbits the head  
like a metal sun.

“It takes a comprehensive picture,” he says.

“So step up, please.

Place your chin on the chin rest  
and grip the plastic bit with your teeth.”

“But didn’t I have X-rays taken during my last  
visit,” I ask,  
chomping on the bit.

“Months ago I shot your lowers on my old  
machine.  
You’re decaying fast  
and we’ll get a better picture of it from this  
one.”

It takes a moment for the high-tech burn to  
develop  
and for him to show me a black hole in my jaw.

“I’m concerned about this,” he says,  
tapping the film with a ball-point pen.  
“You should see an oral surgeon, immediately!  
But this represents the value of comprehensive  
pictures.  
They catch things in time.”

“WHAT KIND OF THINGS!” I shout.

“That’s beyond my specialty.  
For now, let’s say black holes  
have no place in the human jaw,” he says,

before shooting me up with Novocain  
for a tooth that needs new silver  
and leaving the room.

I think of cancer.

See my face collapse into the palms of my  
hands.

Catch an image of holes in Southwest rock  
formations.

Jesus! I was lucky to have X-rays taken.

Maybe, I’ve caught the hole in time.

Maybe, I have a few more years.

WHAT THE HELL CAN HAPPEN NEXT!

LIFE SUCKS!

I’M AFRAID!

WHY ME!

My dentist reenters the room:

“Numb enough?”

“NUMB WITH FEAR!

Doc, level with me.

Give the horrible disease a name.”

“You’re jumping to conclusions.

Let’s wait and see what an oral surgeon has to  
say.

It could be something as innocuous as bad  
film.”

“BAD FILM?”

“I could shoot another picture  
if you’d like?”

“GET ME TO THE METAL SUN!”

This time a photo minus a black hole in my  
jaw.

“That’s good news,” he exclaims,  
and starts to work on a cavity  
that could restore a blind man’s sight.

(As poem appears in Expressway-Literary  
Magazine Delgado Community College)

91. **Parenthesis.** Keys one of my favorite e.e.  
cumplings’ poems, *since feeling is first*, with the  
ending line: “And death I think is no parenthesis”

92. **bee.** I’m a recovering bee-o-phobic personality.

93. **Jocasta.** My only reference to Sophocles.

94. **Postman.** Been there, done that.

95. **Jump Cut.** Movie term. Explored as technique  
in my poem “Elect Me.”

See *Modulations*, pp. 21-22. Appendix O for  
order form.

96. **mononucleosis.** Prior to my bout with mono  
(1989), I had my first gall bladder attack at my  
girlfriend’s father’s house on Christmas Eve. A gall

bladder attack is quite painful. It’s hard not to  
think it’s your heart because arrows of pinpoint  
pain pass through your body, taking away breath  
and bringing you to your knees. I dropped on my  
knees in front of my girlfriend’s family after  
coming out of the bathroom dressed in the gifts  
they had given me. The gifts included a pair of  
boxer shorts with tiny red lobsters on them. My  
girlfriend and her family thought my plunge to my  
knees was some weird comic routine I had in mind.  
They stepped over me without laughing and went  
next door to go Xmas caroling with the couple who  
lived there. In excruciating pain, I crawled up the  
stairs to her dad’s bedroom and called my sister in  
Binghamton. She told me to call 911, which I did.  
See Appendix P for the flash fiction story “Antlers”  
recounting this event.

97. **sister.** I have an older sister, Joanne. She always  
got better grades than I.

98. **Aurora Borealis.** Northern lights. High  
altitude, many-colored flashing luminosity, visible  
in night skies of polar and sometimes temperate  
regions. Thought to be caused by injection of  
charged particles - solar origin in nature.

## JOURNEY

We are now free to make up our names.  
At this time tomorrow the wounded tree  
will grow yellow leaves and ask

its only bird to return the sky.  
It's a simple exercise really.  
You just get up, read something you'll  
never understand, and then compose.

It makes sense -the disjunction- that is.  
It's not that we don't love words, we do,  
and often walk lonely streets with our pockets  
full of them. Reach in and toss  
*rose* into the air. Remember the line  
traversing *beautiful* has disappeared.  
Be grateful for the restoration of supple forms.

Little stories then like this: I was forty  
and sitting in a doctor's office  
on my birthday. I had been sweating  
for weeks and felt tired all the time.  
While a nurse drew blood she talked about  
the aurora borealis - how the sky turned green.  
"Just like when we used to trip," she said.

**99. trip.** I took my first acid trip while I was a  
sophomore at SUNY Binghamton (1968-1972).  
This is a bullet-version of it.

- Drank pitchers of beer all afternoon at the  
Pine Lounge
- Returned to University
- Smoked hash in dorm
- Friend shot me in head with plastic dart gun
- Tossed work boot in air (so I thought) to  
retaliate in fun
- Boot landed on friend's knee and fractured  
knee cap
- Thought friend was joking
- Don't jerk me around
- Wandered out of Dorm into foyer
- Passed out
- Another friend came by
- Raised my head
- Said Body of Christ
- Put Four-Way Hit of Acid on my tongue
- 45 minutes later un-passed out
- Walked to student center
- Buildings breathing
- Put in call to girl (friend) I knew
- Said something funny is happening to me
- Returned to cafeteria table
- Another friend wanders behind me
- Asking where I am
- *Does anybody know where Dick Martin is*
- *I'm right here*
- Girl (friend) arrived
- Saw her walking through the door at the same  
time she touched my hand
- Returned to my apartment with her
- Friends from next door apartment came by
- Made me chicken soup
- Taught me to chant OM
- Said I was tripping
- Saw my hand pass through my thigh
- Took shower...felt individual drops of water
- Sorta freaking out
- Up all night



- Received call from brother's friend with busted knee
- *What's the matter with you guys*
- In morning walked to bar that one of the friends worked at
- Not at work
- Came back down the street
- Young boy with a large snake jumped out at me from a parking lot
- Noticed snake was rubber
- Asked boy why he wasn't in school
- Walked home
- Went to bed
- Slept for the day
- And night
- Got up next morning when girl (friend) knocked on door
- Aren't you going to class
- Talked over strange events with her
- *What are you saying*
- *I haven't seen you for two days*
- Shook head
- Went out of apartment
- Looked up the street
- Saw boy with snake
- *Do you see him*
- *Yes, there's a boy wiggling a snake at us*
- *Wow*
- Got into car
- After class went over to bar where friend worked
- Told other friend in traction at hospital
- *No way*
- *No kidding*
- Went to hospital
- Friend in traction with busted knee
- *Don't jerk me around*

## APPENDIX N

### ONE

The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao.  
The name that can be named is not the eternal  
name.  
The nameless is the beginning of heaven and  
earth.  
The named is the mother of ten thousand  
things.  
Ever desireless, one can see the mystery.  
Ever desiring, one can see the manifestations.  
This appears as darkness.  
Darkness within darkness  
The gate to all mystery.

from: TAO TE CHING, Lao-Tsu. a new  
translation by Gia-Fu Feng & Jane English,  
Vintage Books, 1972.

### FIRST WARD TRANSLATION

The way you go dissolves upon arrival.  
Naming things fills cranial holes temporarily.  
Nameless things cradle the “on” button.  
Labeled things will reproduce until fashion  
shifts.  
Wanting nada, paint chips appear interesting.  
Wanting something induces pregnancies.  
Nada and something both spring from one crack  
But differ in facial expressions;  
This appears as “Room for rent.”

Vacancy within vacancy.  
The door to all unfurnished apartments.

Tom Kolpakas

# Modulations

*Richard Martin*

Asylum Arts is pleased to announce the publication of *Modulations* by Richard Martin. Full of the pulsating energy readers and listeners have come to expect from Martin, the leaping, compassionate, and incisive poems in *Modulations* will appeal to a wide range of readers at both the university and community level. As poet and National Public Radio commentator Andrei Codrescu has said of Martin: "He is the chronicler of the empty dynamism of this culture, but he knows its joys too. In the fast-paced world of his verse there beats a fierce and oddly tonic heart."

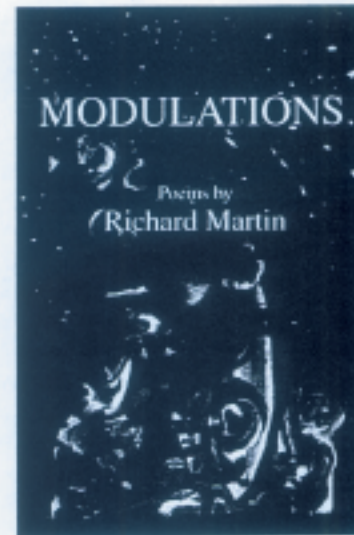
RICHARD MARTIN is the author of *Dream Of Long Headdresses: Poems From A Thousand Hospitals*, *White Man Appears On Southern California Beach* and *Negation Of Beautiful Words*. His poems have appeared in the anthologies: *Aloud: Voices From The Nuyorican Poets Cafe* and *American Poets Say Goodbye To The 20th Century*. For fourteen years he hosted the Big Horror Poetry Series in Binghamton, NY. Awards for his poetry include a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship. He currently resides in Boston, MA.

Hallelujah! Now that poetry's back, we need to find some great new poets to fill up the spaces our imaginations can't imagine. Luckily, we've got Dick Martin, whose real good at it. He's been around, but is ever-vibrantly new, and, Totally Great. As we line up according to how we've been victimized, as we (finally!) understand that neutrinos from an exploding star caused the extinction of the dinosaurs, I, personally, take solace and hope from these poems, amiable a-bombs to consciousness. Crack this book, Reader, and see things as they are.

—Bob Holman

"It's not often there's a poet so simply a pleasure and so secure in what he has to offer. Martin know what he's doing and has that dependable virtue."

—Robert Creeley



112 pages; 5 1/2 x 8 1/2; ISBN 1-878580-67-1; \$12.00 paperback

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## ANTLERS

There was the time my ex-boyfriend spent Christmas Eve at my father's house and had a gall bladder attack after opening his gifts. Of course, I thought he was just kidding - putting on a little act for the relatives for some laughs. Look, he was a bit strange, or maybe spontaneous and came out after a visit to the bathroom completely attired in the goofy gifts my family had given him and stood there (behind us and leaning up against the grand piano) twisted in pain.

You see, I have a younger brother and sister, twins, in their late twenties, and for gag gifts they had given him a pair of boxer underwear embossed with red lobsters and a green T-shirt covered with rabbits. All the rabbits on the shirt were pink except for one. In the middle of the pink parade of "you silly wabbits" there stood a bugged-eye gray one. And the shirt had a message: **OH, NO, A GRAY HAIR!** Daddy Burns (everyone calls my father, Daddy Burns) had tossed in a longshoreman's toboggan hat to complete the ensemble. No one expected that my ex-boyfriend would strip off his holiday outfit and return to the living room dressed like an old fool who'd benefit from a GI series at our local hospital.

But that's exactly what Bobby did and needed. At first we didn't notice him. We were sitting by the tree, sipping martinis and chit-chatting about the season and memories fluttering through our

minds like cheery ghosts. We're all a bunch of chit-chatters in my family. We chit-chat about this. Chit-chat about that. Chit-chatters!

"Like the time Daddy Burns sawed down a spruce tree in someone's yard," I said. "Remember? What was I, around eight years old or so?" My brother and sister clapped their hands and Daddy Burns smiled. He took a big sip of his martini and launched into the ancient tale. Yes, it was his first time ever cutting down our own tree with a bunch of screaming "little" ones in the car. Yes, he had stopped by a countryside shack of cut trees and was told about a place about 1/2 mile down the road where you could chop down your own. "Look for a light on the porch of an old white farmhouse," Daddy Burns said an old farmer had said. "Pull in the driveway and the trees to cut are right in front of you."

"I thought it was odd to be cutting down a tree from a line of them bordering someone's driveway," Daddy Burns said. "But that's what the farmer told me and I picked out the very best one. A lovely tree, tall and full, and in a jiffy had it tied to the hood of the car. Then it started to snow, large wet flakes, and Cassy yelled: **IT LOOKS LIKE A TOOTH MISSING FROM MY MOUTH!** Remember, Cassy? (that's me). And that's when I realized my mistake and said: Man, let's get the hell out of here!"

And we laughed at Daddy Burn's story and memory of it before realizing Bobby had come out of the bathroom and was standing behind us in his

bizarre outfit. I admit he startled me. He was not a pretty site: white spindly legs with prominent scars around his bony knees from the numerous operations that kept him playing basketball into his late thirties. He claims to have been a contender, which for him meant playing in the CBA (Central Basketball Association) and holding onto the all time free throw percentage in that league. He was proud of this record and the one for sit-ups he set while attending junior high in Binghamton, New York in 1963. He swears he did 93 of them in two minutes.

That's where I met him, in Binghamton. I was working as a liquor store clerk and picking up a degree at the local state university. He used to stop by the store for an occasional pint of Black Velvet. We chatted. He was out of basketball and worked for a medical supplies store. Every now and then he signed up for the open-mike comedy night out at the Holiday Inn on the parkway. Up for laughs, I tagged along and got to know him.

His comedy was about old people. How they drove their cars and shopping carts. What they thought about on a rainy day. Sometimes, he imitated their walk with one of those aluminum walkers. Funny, I guess. Nothing that mean-spirited. Just gag material he had picked up via observation and working in hospitals before his stint in the CBA. He was going nowhere. I was and decided to let him hitch a ride.

"God, Bobby," I started to say. But before I could finish my sentence, he doubled over and fell on his

knees. He started to pant: "I can't breathe. I can't breathe."

"It's not funny, Bobby," I said. "It's really not that funny."

Daddy Burns shook his head in agreement and popped the olive from his drink into his mouth. "No, really, Cassy," Bobby mumbled. "This is for real. A real McCoy, honey."

"Sure, it is Bobby," I said. "Now just get up and get out of that stuff. It's time for us to go caroling with Daddy Burns and his friend Maggie from next door."

But Bobby kept panting. Then he began to roll from side to side. "OK, then, Bobby," I said. "We're going to leave but you can meet us in five minutes at Maggie's. We'll have a quick drink before leaving."

"Honey-bun, honey-bun," Bobby mumbled between groans.

We stepped around Bobby and made for the front door. Daddy Burns decided to wear the antlers I had made for him from some old throw rugs and flannel pajamas. *Tis the season*. When the ambulance pulled up in front of my father's house and the attendants rushed out with Bobby on a stretcher, I knew he had gone too far this time. I have a degree in Psychology.

# DAY NINE

A Brief Intermission

## DAY TEN

March 7, 1999

Dear Reader,

Intermission is a necessary part of a person's life. Take the word itself: *intermission*. As an amateur etymologist, I claim the root meaning of the word is emptiness or off the clock or a space free of attention and duty between missions. Missions are everything for humans. We do and go on them to keep our act going – our boats afloat. Missions are our projects, those things that occupy our attention. My memoir is a mission, a project, a task-at-hand that I decided to write because it snowed enough one day to knock me out of work. In a way the mission of writing my memoir came about because an intermission of weather intruded on my day. What a break! For now, it has a life of its own and a place within the set of missions I've been on (even as it records some of them) and is linked to the vast array of missions out there that others, including yourself, have been on and/or are creating to pass the time and define existence.

There has to be a space, a hesitation, or some kind of cessation between missions. Without intermissions, we'd be on continual missions and the very form of them would be lost to our comprehension. *Inter* equals vacationland. Vacationland equals the cigarette smoked between Acts II and III of \_\_\_\_\_ or the chardonnay sipped after Moses parts the Red Sea and needs to take 5 himself before pushing on to the

Land of Milk and Honey.

I don't think there are as many intermissions as there used to be. Certainly the movies have taken a hit in this area. I remember as a kid going to some great movies like *The Ten Commandments*, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, and **Pound's Cantos** and getting an intermission halfway into them. Of course these were epics – big tales – that took big time to tell and experience and we seemed to have the time for them.

But now we don't. What's that say about us and time? Intermissions are a luxury – a time for looking at the scuff on your shoes, thinking about whether the **universe** will expand forever or contract upon itself, sneaking a glimpse at a good-looking babe. I'm not saying they're extinct. You can still catch them between bands at rock concerts or between composers at classical music events. They still live, but there just aren't as many, and even if there are, it doesn't seem like it to me.

Frankly, we're not AN INTERMISSION SOCIETY any longer. Yes, we have the seventh-inning stretch and various forms of half-time entertainment. But even here, we're required to do stuff, i.e., sing: *Take Me Out To The Ballgame*, and/or if we're not glued to our Superbowl extravaganzas featuring the latest ephemeral Pop Stars of smoke and glitter belting out an uplifting patriotic medley, then we're driving half-crazed to a local convenience store for another bag of Doritos.

"What you talkin' about, everyone?" Gary

Coleman said this the other night on the Simpson's and maybe the idea contained in the quote applies here. Maybe it doesn't. But I'm talking, ain't I? And this is what I'm saying: Do we have siesta time in the States? Of course not. Are siestas and intermissions linked? Of course they are. And the only way we extend the notion of intermission into falling into a dead snore in the middle of the afternoon is to have the *balls* to do it.

I have the **balls**. That's why I put an intermission in my memoir. But it took practice and courage on my part to do it. Sure the old movies helped and provided the model, but my involvement in household tasks and projects was also key in my understanding of the necessity for intermission. Say you called me up right now on the phone and named any common household task, I could tell you the type of intermission I took while completing it.

Take the time I built a new back porch for my mom with a friend. As I noted in *Tool Interruptus* (Day Eight, Note 62), I knew little about carpentry and showed almost no aptitude for working with tools. And even though I did as my old man request, namely, to stay out of his hair and practice my free throws at Recreation Park, I continued to involve myself in household tasks and work projects typical for a man. So when mom requested a new porch, I came up with a friend who knew enough about wood for us to succeed at the task.

It was right after we ripped off the old porch that I suggested a *beer intermission* as the natural

space that existed between the old porch coming down and the new porch going up. We had taken little breaks during the wrecking of the old porch (smoking a weed or two) but breaks are not intermissions per say. Breaks exist or can occur during the actual mission. You might, for instance, have to get up and take a pee during Act I of \_\_\_\_\_. Or suppose I had stepped on a nail during the period of old porch destruction and had to go to the hospital for a tetanus shot. Even if I had to wait for a few hours to get a shot, the visit to the hospital would still be considered a break and not an intermission because it occurred during the mission of knocking down the old porch. There are distinctions to be made. But the old porch was down, and we needed a beer. Driving to Jones Beach, Long Island, from Binghamton with our beers for a few days of sun and sea is well within my notion and respect for intermission. Mom was pissed. But when I explained to her that the sea-roaring idleness now in my soul lent itself to the completion of the task, she was able to shake her head with less disgust than normally apparent within situations like this. (During the rewrite of this Day, my daughter, Melissa, and my son, Joseph, have been visiting me. Everyone in the house has been or is sick with cold germs. To save baby Nicole from getting sick and to ease her mind, my daughter has been spraying all the doorknobs and toilet seats in the house with Lysol disinfectant spray. The spray has an antibacterial action and guarantees to kill viruses, bacteria, mold



and mildew. It also eliminates odors. It's powerful stuff. I've been periodically asking my daughter to read this letter to you during its revision.) After reviewing my commitment to porch building and informing me that my distinctions between breaks and intermissions have a legalese ring to them (she's in law school), she suggested I apply the word slacker to capture the subtext of my comments. (Because the microbial world of rhinovirus, rotavirus, staph, strep, and, not mention athlete's foot, is pretty nasty we've come up with Dimethyl Benzyl Ammonium Saccharinate to kick their invisible little butts). Interruptions and breaks are related to intermissions, but let's not call them intermissions or confuse them with intermissions.

Eventually my friend and I finished building my mom a new porch. Later that summer, my mom and aunt watched me leap from a ladder two-stories up with a yellow bucket of latex paint in my hand to the hard ground below from deck chairs on the new porch. A yellow jacket had come too close for comfort and my rights as a bee-phobic personality came into play. I took an injury intermission for a sprained ankle and never finished painting the house.

I hoped you got off on yesterday's intermission. Let me know what you did and where you went.

Yours truly,

Richard Martin

P.S. I thought you might enjoy reading the openings of my three favorite books (in the Notes).

## NOTES

**100. Pound's Cantos.** Only reference to Ezra Pound.

**101. universe.** From the high school notebook of Carl Sagan: There are 170 octillion stars in the universe. All of the sand grains on earth represent 1/100 of the number of stars.

**102. balls.** Besides basketball, dad tried to involve me in the game of baseball. He bought me a mitt when I was in first grade, but I threw it on the ground after trying it on. I was a **cowboy** at that time and couldn't be involved with something that didn't pump out hot lead. Eventually, (to please him?) I struggled through the farm teams of little league. Playing on a farm team meant you weren't too good of a ballplayer. I finally made the official little league team during my last year of eligibility. During my first appearance at the plate, I got hit in the nuts with a fast ball on the very first pitch thrown at me. That was it for baseball.

**103. Recreation Park.** Recreation Park is located between Beethoven St. and Laurel Ave. on the Westside of Binghamton, NY. I grew up in the park. It was built for the people of Binghamton by George F. Johnson. Johnson was one of the founders of the Endicott Johnson Shoe Factory. The poem below came to me during a walk through the park sometime during the Eighties. Johnson is the bronze man of shoes.

## THE MYTH OF MY OWN SUFFERING

I walk in a neighborhood of ghosts  
through a park  
where a bronze man of shoes  
looks past child and cobbler.  
*Labor Is Good* says the rock he sits on.  
*Believe In The People.*  
Children on swings kick their feet  
at leaves in the air  
and the boy who drives to the hoop  
has too much *english* on the ball  
for it to drop.  
The cop in his car  
between pavilion and carousel  
(and has been there  
since the days a park rat slashed  
my Super K autographed Bob Cousy basketball  
with a steak knife)  
scratches his head  
and opens the evening paper.  
It is October light.  
I want to gather the mothers smoking cigarettes  
into a circle  
and kiss them on the lips.

My mother used to threaten my mouth with  
soap.  
She'd slap my knuckles with a hairbrush  
and say my heart was made of wood.  
She didn't listen to cancer doctors

and worried about job and children.  
The day I told a stranger on the bus  
my first son choked to death  
on his umbilical cord  
I wanted to wash out my heart.  
When the cancer went into her brain  
the doctors stood in the hall  
and discussed massive chemotherapy  
like referees involved in a close play.  
I skip the impulse of jumping from a bridge  
into stone across dark water.  
Where are the new lovers?  
I held him and remember blue fingernails.

**104. work projects.** During my work life on earth, I've painted houses, put in gravel driveways, attached "skirting" to the sides of trailer homes, tarred the roofs of trailer homes, passed tools to those fixing stoves, furnaces and a host of other appliances. I had little success doing any of this stuff.

**105. three books.** In order of importance to me.

1. *Notes from Underground*, Fyodor Dostoevsky.

"I am a sick man...I am a spiteful man. I am an unpleasant man. I think my liver is diseased. However, I don't know beans about my disease, and I am not sure what is bothering me. I don't treat it and never have, though I respect medicine and doctors. Besides, I am extremely superstitious, let's

say sufficiently so to respect medicine. (I am educated enough not to be superstitious, but I am). No, I refuse to treat it out of spite. You probably will not understand that. Well, but I understand it. Of course, I can't explain to you just whom I am annoying in this case by my spite. I am perfectly well aware that I cannot "get even" with the doctors by not consulting them. I know better than anyone that I thereby injure only myself and no one else. But still, if I don't treat it, it is out of spite. My liver is bad, well then - let it get even worse!"

(E.P. Dutton, NY - 1960; p. 3).

2. *Moby Dick*, Herman Melville

"Call me Ishmael. Some years ago-never mind how long precisely-having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. It is a way I have of driving off the spleen, and regulating circulation. Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp drizzly November in my soul: whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet; and especially whenever my **hypos** get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people's hats off-then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can.

This is my substitute for pistol and ball. With a philosophical flourish Cato throws himself upon his sword; I quietly take to the ship. There is nothing surprising in this. If they but knew it, almost all men in their degree, some time or other, cherish very nearly the same feelings towards the ocean with me.

(*Moby Dick*, W.W. Norton, 1967, p.11.)

*Tropic Of Cancer*, Henry Miller

“I am living at the Villa Borghese. There is not a crumb of dirt anywhere, nor a chair misplaced. We are all alone here and we are dead.

Last night Boris discovered that he was lousy. I had to shave his armpits and even then the itching did not stop. How can one get lousy in a beautiful place like this? But no matter. We might never have known each other so intimately, Boris and I, had it not been for the lice.

Boris had just given me a summary of his views. He is a weather prophet. The weather will continue bad, he says. There will be more calamities, more death, more despair. Not the slightest indication of a change anywhere. The cancer of time is eating us away. Our heroes have killed themselves, or are killing themselves. The hero, then is not Time but Timelessness. We must get in step, a lock step, toward the prison of death. There is no escape. The weather will not change.”

(*Tropic Of Cancer*, Grove Press, 1961, p. 1)

**106. cowboy.** In 1992 I started a story called “Cowboys Don’t Eat Butter.” It’s a story that chronicles the collapse of my first marriage. I never finished it, but I always dug the title. It’s a fact that I don’t like butter and haven’t liked it since the days I was a cowboy. My cousin Fireball, who was also a cowboy, invented the disdain for butter during one of our childhood days on the ranch. **Fireball** was two years older than me so I pretty much took to heart everything he said and did. When he told his mom one day, before we got off our horses for lunch, that cowboys don’t eat butter, I seconded his understanding. His disdain for butter lasted an entire day. My disdain has lasted since that moment long ago. Here’s how the story starts:

#### COWBOYS DON’T EAT BUTTER

Frank had problems.

“Louise,” he said. “Don’t you think history is stupid? And why are we so addicted to recording experiences that seem so stupid?”

Louise didn’t love Frank anymore and was starting not to like him either. She wanted to go to sleep. She rolled to the edge of the bed and curled up like a fetus.

“I don’t know Frank,” she said. “Go to sleep.”

Frank ignored her.

“I mean what good does it do to know about the Battle of Waterloo or about the causes of World

War 2. We'll never learn. We're repeaters. There's probably some perverse gene at the root of it all."

"Frank, it's late," Louise said. "Take a pill and shut-up."

She pulled her knees in even tighter to her chest and stared with one eye at the red numerals of the digital clock on the bed stand. It was three o'clock.

Frank flopped like a fish to her side of the king-size bed and draped his arm around her. She was a gorgeous fetus and looked a little like Sophia Loren in the right kind of light. Frank took a whiff of her hair and tried to wedge his hand in between her knees and breasts.

"Come on Louise," he said. "Give in a little."

When Frank's rate of breathing increased and she felt his hand start to rub her buttocks like he was polishing a car's fender, she reached for a rubber mallet behind the clock. It was part of a care package her mother had sent to her after receiving a letter from her that chronicled some of Frank's most obsessive and annoying behaviors. Besides the mallet, her mother had included in the care package a dozen chocolate chip cookies, a picture of her dad (Big Sam) by the company's Xerox machine, and the names of prominent divorce lawyers in the area.

"Oh, Louise, you know how I feel about you," Frank said. "Give me a chance to prove it."

When his head rose like a dark moon above her shoulder, Louise greeted it with a backhand swipe of the mallet to the center of his forehead. The connection was strong and true and produced a

thud in the air that resembled a shoe that lands beside a cat sharpening its claws on a living room rug.

"Pleasant dreams, Frank." Louise said.

Within minutes he started to snore.

**107. trailer homes.** I prefer not to write about my trailer home experiences.

**108. hypos.** I'm a recovering hypochondriac. *Will this hurt me?* was my key question to my mother while growing up.

**109. Fireball.** See poem.

#### BLACKJACK

They anointed his  
Intelligence  
And threw him into  
The river  
Of life

#### UNFORTUNATE TROPES OF THE WORLD

Unite  
This is what happens  
When I wear my Bruin's  
Hat  
And blondes with nose rings  
Work the rib grill  
LOCAL TIME STAR DATE  
What if a German  
Shepherd

Took the Heidegger course  
With me  
Flash of memory  
In a cardsharp's  
Hands

On the barroom napkins  
TV politicians scribble  
Violence inflames society  
"Do you have a pay phone?"  
"Not anymore."  
Sweet spontaneity turns  
The windows  
Into lemons  
Ten years ago my  
Cousin Fireball  
Bought a case  
Of Anchor Steam  
We sat in his backyard  
And launched arrows  
Into a neighbor's yard  
COGITO ERGO SUM  
Stretch the narrative  
Into a house of mirrors  
The barrel over  
The waterfall leaves  
In ten minutes

DOT DOT DOT

Morse was  
The name of my cub  
Scout pack's den mother

She took us  
On walks along  
The Susquehanna River  
And made us  
Make pot holders  
You can't stop and discuss  
The charm  
Of intertextuality  
When someone's chasing  
You down the street  
With a wolf badge  
Dad made the backboard  
Into a table  
And left home  
The day my brother beat  
Him in  
Ping pong

110. COGITO ERGO SUM. See poem.

#### RATIONAL VARIATIONS

I had a few minutes  
To say  
I am

I hadn't thought  
I was

## DAY ELEVEN

It's a pencil without a point but the only writing tool I can find heading into Day Eleven. I have a problem with writing tools. I never have enough and never can find one when I need one. I used to freak-out about this and would run around the house flinging open junk drawers and yelling: "I need a damn pencil for Christ sakes, not a corkscrew or eye-tweezers." I became very unpopular with my family for causing scenes like this in the house and in more public spaces. But scene-making lives in my personality with some of my better qualities and it would be foolish for me to deny that I have been a perpetrator of many scenes over the years with loved ones and friends.

Scenes are happenings of *stressed-out* or negative energy, and they always involve another person who would rather not be part of the scene, if at all possible. Scenes come with words: quick words, usually sharp, sardonic, or down-right hostile. But scenes are much more than words. In fact, having *words* with another is always a possibility but once any physical activity begins (running around the house, throwing open drawers) you've left the realm of *words* and enter the realm of *scenes*. Because I've never had a **scene** without words, I usually refer to *scenes as Words and Scenes*. If there's no physical activity, I simply use the word *words* to describe the *stressed-out* encounter. Besides *words and scenes* over the absence of writing tools, I'm prone to *words and scenes* involving the automobile or those that sneak

into existence while shopping for clothes and household goods.

An archetypical (*words and scenes*) car event goes like this: I'm driving back to Boston with my wife after spending Thanksgiving with her family in Albany for the first time. Things in the car, i.e., the ambience of music, pleasant conversation, and digestion are going fine. We've passed through the Berkshires without the scheduled snow flurries and have fallen into a fast rhythm of cars eating up the turnpike through Springfield, Chicopee, and a host of other points as we proceed east on I 90. However, as we approach Sturbridge (Exit 9), the point at which I 84 in Connecticut dumps into I 90, an endless line of stopped cars and their red-tail lights comes into view. I 84 is the interstate responsible for bringing all those who visited NYC over the holidays back to New England. As I hit the breaks, I say:

"Shit, I knew this would happen. Look at the traffic up ahead. It's going to be like this all the way back to Boston. We're never going to get home."

My wife looks up from her knitting to say: "We don't know that. Maybe there's an accident up ahead or it's just a traffic slow-down due to the intersection of the highways."

(Before I hit the steering wheel pretty hard with my hand, I'd like to interjection two things. 1. The fuel for *words and scenes* comes from a rational explanation and/or any alternative explanation to a perceived event or situation other than the

immediate bad-ass response offered by person hosting the *words and scenes* event. 2. I need a damn pencil with a point for Christ sakes.)

“Right,” I say, smashing my hand against the steering wheel while spraying my wife with a look of irritation. “We’re sitting, baby, on our asses in traffic for hours.”

My wife pats me on the knee and returns to knitting, opting for the tune-out strategy. I counter with my own strategy: whistling fragments of **show tunes** that randomly pop into my head. I have to stay with fragments because there’s not a show tune in my head that I know from start to finish. I’m not sure how fragments of show tunes actually became part of my subconscious musical repertoire, but I seem to annoy others when I whistle fragments of them. I get a *rise* out of them as my mother used to say. I break into a few bars from Camelot before smashing the wheel with my hand again while timing the strike with words: “Shit! I hear your call in way-off France.” By this time, I’ve brought the car to a complete dead-stop on the thruway. Endless cars in front of me. Endless cars behind me. I am “**stuck inside the frozen traffic.**”

Now for any of you who might be thinking this sounds like a case of road rage, I beg to differ. I’m pissed off, true enough, but not at the other motorists. I’m pissed at myself for being such a damn idiot and taking a drive through New England on Thanksgiving Day Weekend.

But my wife’s good. She’s holding strong with

her tune-out strategy and I’m craving some active disapproval from her. So I stop with show tunes, and the hitting of the steering wheel with my hand, and quickly pull off my pants, remove my underwear, and slip my pants back on. This activates her disbelief and goads her to speak.

“My God,” she says. “What are you doing? Are you nuts?”

“Nuts,” you say. Am I nuts? No. It’s too damn hot in here. My boys have to breathe. They need air. I hate the damn underwear anyway. And so does **Mr. Winky**. He hates it most of all.”

She rolls her eyes and says: “This won’t ever happen again. Because from here on out, I’m simply going to refuse to go anywhere with you in a car. I’ll take my own car. I’ll meet you there, bub.”

Bub is a good place to end a *words and scenes* car event archetype. The traffic starts to thaw to life and begins to trickle forward. After a few minutes it starts to run, the ice jam wilts, and we’re back up to 75 miles per hour with only 55 miles to go before we get home.

Now for shopping: Two memories come back to me that seem like possible candidates for pinpointing my disdain for shopping and for contributing to *words and scenes* around the shopping enterprise. Both occurred during my childhood years. The first one finds me with my **grandmother** on my mother’s side. It’s the day she took me shopping for the first time. After what seemed to me to be a big build up around the event, things went pretty flat. In other words, I



didn't get a new six-shooter or pair of cowboy boots with spurs, something I could use. No, Gram, instead, dragged me to the section of the department store where sheets and towels were sold. It didn't take her long to buy me a brand new hand towel and wash cloth, a matching ensemble in a pattern of green and white stripes. "Whoopee," I shouted when she handed me the bag and patted me on the head. Enter hermeneutics. What did this purchase mean? Was grandma telling me I needed to wash? Was she telling me I was a dirty little boy? Or was she giving me a lesson on how things should match? If not a cleanliness fetish, there was at least a neatness one going on in my family. Maybe neatness is the bridge between cleanliness and matching apparel whether from the bathroom or the clothes closet. I remember my hair being combed each day before I went to school, and my shirt had to be tucked in. It's a safe bet that my socks matched my tie. But anomalies existed. My mom had no problem demanding that I wear rubbers over my combat boots. I was in first grade then and these combat boots were nasty – big, thick rubber heels, sturdy leather, flaps with double buckles, and on the flaps soldiers with bayonets ready to fight. These boots were made for mud and water. They thrived on bad weather and no way did black shoe rubbers match their color or purpose. But Mom was adamant about the rubbers so I wore them over the boots during a sprinkling of rain. Things didn't work out. When the older kids in the schoolyard saw them

over my kick-ass boots, they felt obliged to beat me up, which they did.

The second memory on shopping discord plays back the time I took a big swig of water from a fountain on display in the middle of a department store. It took the rest of the day and lots of real water to get the taste of Chanel #5 out of my mouth. Though it seems foolish to think that two minor events such as these would form the foundation from which I would build an intense hatred for the All-American sport of shopping, I accept the possibility of it. I'm a quick-dis-study. I had only to throw up from eating lemon meringue pie once before swearing it off forever.

But even idiots grow a little over a lifetime. Evidence: I spent the weekend (March 6/7, 1999) shopping with Eileen in anticipation for the big bash on my 50th birthday. On credit and without incident, we purchased a home entertainment unit and \$557 dollars worth of booze. The home entertainment unit included: a 32" Sony Trinitron TV, a Bose Acoutimass-6 home theater speaker system (5 cube speakers: 31/8"H x 3"W x 43/4"D – 1.11 lbs.) with Acoustimas module (14"H x 71/2"W x 16"D – 19 lbs.), a Technics AV Control Stereo (SA – Ax720), a Technics Digital Surround Processor (sh – AC500D), a Onkyo Cassette Deck (TA – RW 344 B) and a Sony Disc Exchange System 5 CD Changer. What do you think?

(I just realized up until now I've been calling, Eileen, either my girlfriend, wife, or second wife throughout the memoir. Things like this happen

when you're writing under a self-imposed time limitation. Wife or girlfriend, what's the difference? We're lovers. Still the pace of the memoir has been getting to me and an idea on how to address this problem dawned on me after I finished the intermission letter (Day Ten). My idea was simple. Since some of these Days took longer to write than others and because I had no idea what I would write about anyway on any given Day to begin with, I needed a way to bank some of the time without truly violating the 50 consecutive days mandate. So why not start Day Eleven on Day Ten? The intermission letter hadn't taken too much time to whip off and the evening of Day Ten was still young when I had completed it. Plus, I knew I had a bitch of a week coming up at work and the big party and preparations for it were close at hand. I needed to store up some time. And the reader (you, you big lug) would never know if I started and even finished Day Eleven on Day Ten. So why not? I could write about my experiences with **doctors**. At least get started on that.

## NOTES

111. **writing tools**. See poem.

### INSTRUCTION

Find an implement made of executive ink.

Sit on the edge of your bed in the morning  
darkness.

(feet dangling or not)

Let a sense, a river of awareness

(if something like that could be –

you know ducks or geese

in some formation of hunger and curiosity.

yes, wild flowers along the bank,

the stray log,

and lawn chair bobbing in the current.)

dawn.

Stop here: it's a bridge.

Now define the world as an historic task.

(not just getting up and finding slippers)

Write:

*My advice is don't follow that order.*

(as a young child spelling was a foreign country  
in an errant dream)

Remember?

(no maps, stars, moon, or fabric of sky outside  
the imagination)

Say it: the mind is metaphysics.

(here's the instruction:)

Revise the apparition of knowing.

(lovely to be here in the midst of things)

Continue.

**112. scene.** After hearing me read Day 11 to her, my daughter, Melissa, challenged the notion that *scenes* always come with *words*. She reminded me of the time I jumped into the shallow end of a public pool and smacked my knee on the bottom of it. Because the knee that was smacked was the one injured at a poetry reading and was not fully healed at this point in time, I leapt out of the pool,

motioned my kids to get out of it, and hobbled toward our car in the parking lot. As I approached the car, I went into an elaborate pantomime of throwing my car keys through the windshield. Of course, I didn't go through with it. I was just pissed and in pain. But I didn't say anything – a scene without words is possible. Thanks, Melissa.

**113. show tunes.** See poem.

#### BROADWAY

We know the world  
Is made of sunlight and darkness  
If I say *traffic jam* or *freedom*  
Someone will invent the afternoon of  
dictionaries

Or chewing their gum  
Walk into a convenience store  
And buy a bottle of spring water  
It's that predictable

When the moon is out  
We back out of driveways  
In stolen cars  
Claiming we're only going

To drop off the mail –  
(Love letters we finally had the time  
To write that begin and end  
With the body in a dizzy sweat

Heart pounding into shattered sky)  
And we won't be back  
Even though the TV is still on  
And someone in a robe and out of chips  
Sings:  
"Hello Dolly, this is Louis, Dolly..."  
Because they (meaning just one person)  
Like show tunes

114. **stuck inside the frozen traffic.** Second reference to Dylan (See Note 1).

115. **Mr. Winky.** Euphemism for **penis**. Story I intend to write: *Mr. Winky Meets Mr. Zipper*.

116. **grandmother.** Do I want to plunge through this portal and open up to the reader the crazy household I grew up in or not? NOT! See poem.

#### PROPER VENTILATION

A farm interrupted answered  
the hat on the phone.  
A Cadillac with tens and twenties  
stuck in creases covered with tarp and guarded.  
All night long he breathes funny  
and looks for the looker inside of him.  
And there are two poems: one with  
laundry hung inside the house; the other  
with it on the line out back.  
He would like to flow.  
How many times can this be repeated?

Original friends drop by to smoke.  
Sudsy rivulets head for the sewer.  
Drop your duds and make suds  
his grandmother ordered.  
Sugar cookies in the jar with red top  
underneath the sink.  
The memories and the guy with a stick  
in the dirt feel out of focus.  
Unmake the thing for Christ's sake.  
Static. Noise. Departure.  
A blue body (under a white sheet  
beside an open window with wind  
ruffling the curtains and light)  
is all I remember.

(from *Modulations*, page 89)

117. **50 consecutive days mandate.** I'm sure you've realized that I didn't achieve my original goal of 50 straight days of memoir writing. I did manage 25 days straight days before a break in the sequence occurred. However, I will not exceed the 50 day limit. Time update: July 25, 1999. Actual writing days: 33.

118. **doctors.** Below is what I wrote when attempting to get a head start on Day Eleven by writing stuff for it on Day Ten. I know I've documented some experiences with doctors prior to this note, but they were actually written after this one, though their place in the memoir would seem to indicate that they were written prior to this account. The

reason for this is simple: I fell behind in keeping up with the Notes I was making and had to return and finish them at a later date (but within the 50 day limit). After I wrote the account that follows this explanation, I decided not to use it as the main body of Day Eleven but rather keep it as a note belonging to that day. I'm one hell of an honest memoir writer.

I have fair skin and due to a lifetime spent in the sun, I developed a case of basal-cell cancer on my forehead a few years ago. I was actually under the care of a doctor at the Guthrie Clinic in Sayre, Pennsylvania, for a case of intertrigo (see Day Fourteen) when he noticed the cancer. It wasn't too much of a stretch that I came down with this. In fact, the doctor had been spraying me with some kind of nitrogen freezing solution for a year or two in order to blister away precancerous spots on my face and body. But when the spot on my forehead continued to return, he took a biopsy of it and found out that it was cancer and had to be removed.

It was a simple procedure. He numbed the area with Novocain and then cut and scraped the area with a scalpel. The procedure reminded me of cutting out a bad spot in an **apple** before eating it. He told me I wouldn't feel anything while he was doing it, but the sound of it would remind me of shaving whiskers off my face. He was right. When I healed, there was a tiny white crescent-shaped scar - just below and to the left of another scar

tattooed on my forehead from a childhood mishap.

I really bonded with the doctor at the Guthrie Clinic, but seeing it was a 7 hour **drive** from Boston, to Sayre, PA, I knew I had to eventually find a dermatologist here. My G.P. doctor in Boston turned me on to one with great technical skills but warned me that her personal style of interaction with patients was somewhat unusual. Because I was a little unusual in his mind, he thought I would be able to tolerate and even appreciate this highly skilled doctor. Besides, basal cell cancer sealed the necessity for me to see someone about every six months, and I was not enamored with the junket to PA.

The day I met Dr. S she had the flu as well as a Russian accent.

"So, who do we have in front of me," she said upon entering the room. "Richard Martin or Martin Richard?"

"Richard Martin," I said.

"So, Martin Richard," she said. "I hope you don't mind that I have flu. All day I suck on lemon drops."

Before I could say I minded or run out of the room, she took three quick steps toward my face and scanned it with her green, sparkling eyes. They zoomed around my face like a satellite orbiting the moon. She focused in on the splotches and craters of my face. I was her man-in-the-moon. Twice she lost control of the lemon drop and it popped from her mouth like a small yellow tongue. After

scanning my face, she retreated a few steps, wetted her lips with a quick tongue and said:

“Martin Richard, face very bad...very sun-damaged face... Martin Richard. But we have treatment for you. Yes, Martin Richard... treatment.

“Treatment?” I repeated eyeing the doorknob.

“Yes, treatment. Here is one way for Martin Richard to go. We take cream...strong cream. You rub in face in morning and evening for three straight weeks, Martin Richard. You go nowhere for entire three weeks. See no one. Never leave house or go into light of day, Martin Richard. No, never, Martin Richard. During three weeks, your face get puffy, Martin Richard, and red as **boiled lobster**. Then you come back to me, Martin Richard and I peel dead skin and find new skin. Yes, Martin Richard, and new skin underneath is as soft as a baby’s bottom.

Seeing the terror in my eyes, she stopped, then continued:

“But I think, Martin Richard, this treatment too radical for you. So we watch and we spray. OK?”

“Yes,” I said. ”Too radical for Martin Richard. We spray.”

**119. penis.** I was named after an orphan named Dick. It’s hard to grow up with this name. Forget that it rhymes with prick. I’ll never forget the time my son, Joe, got off the bus after his first day in kindergarten. After I picked him up, gave him a hug, and set him down, he looked up at me and

said: “Daddy, do you know your name means penis?” “Of course, I do,” I said. He seemed all right with the explanation.

**120 apple.** Fruit of choice in the Garden of Eden. See Appendix Q for **Dirty Laundry**.

**121. drive.** “Driving along in my automobile...” Only reference to Chuck Berry.

**122. lobster.** According to Kathleen Flannery (great Boston principal), the best lobster roll in the Greater Boston area can be found at Kelly’s on Revere Beach.

## DIRTY LAUNDRY

I like to think about Adam and Eve. I don't claim I believe in their existence; it's easier for me to visualize something crawling from the ocean, dropping fins and gills, and catching a breath of air. For the record, I'm not a creationist or into evolution and could give a shit about doctrines and theories obsessing the human mind. Adam and Eve are simply friends of my imagination who choose to visit me when I'm sprawled across shirts and socks in the dining room or high atop a mound of wadded underwear and soggy towels on my bed. That they always arrive in the nude impresses the hell out of me.

Of course my sexist eye is attracted to Eve first. What a rib she turned out to be! A breast man myself, her set fits my primordial idea of nourishment and reinforces my Aristotelian sense of moderation. Neither too large, too small, too lean, nor too fat, her *titties* are fabulous pears waiting for a kiss. The rest of her body conforms to a realist's pornographic idea of proportion when imprisoned by ecstatic visions. Call her a knockout who struts through my florid imagination on perfect wheels. The kiddy leaf, which we've been assured covers the Mound of Venus, is not apparent to my eye. Why should it be?

Adam isn't half-bad himself: lots of muscle, handsome face, blue eyes, modest prick. A bit too Hollywood and chiseled for my taste, he walks

around like a wannabe on the set of Mount Olympus. His voice does possess an ancient authority and resonance when he points to an erection and thunders at Eve to hop on it. If she's in the mood they go at it, oblivious to the fact I'm drowning in a lake of filthy sweat socks. In fact, they play dumb about my laundry problem. It's the garden of my mind that attracts them. All night – I usually take to one of the mounds at night – they wander through a mental vegetation of lush palms and exotic plants, nibbling on fruit, and sunning themselves on rocks. Of course they fuck – why not? They've got the time. For them a trip to a Laundromat is diving into a clear pool at the base of an enormous waterfall, free, and without any clothes. No damn clothes!

I don't want to make the case that Eve's indiscretion with an apple is the cause, the underlying metaphysical event, that demands a portion of my fleeting existence be spent carrying (count them) two-three-four Hefty bags of laundry to the nearest public soapsuds emporium. But there I am on any given day with two young children lugging their own bags and catching a street diatribe on clothes, as part of their home instruction on life with Dad.

"What do you mean you can't use the same washcloth and towel for a month? What kind of crap is that?"

Or something like:

"I know you kids deliberately roll in mud on your way home from school. Just to torture me. Just

to see your daddy cry.”

Some nights writhing on the moldy peaks of damp towels, I try to explain my position to my garden friends. “Look, Eve, I comprehend toil and sweat. But the clothes, man, do they have to be part of the deal?” She just grins, shrugs her shoulders, and latches onto Adam’s lightning rod with purple lips. She knows what would happen to anyone who shed his/her burdensome attire and walked down the street shouting: *Enough, already. Let’s expose ourselves for Christ sakes.* It just wouldn’t catch on. And if it did, the entire regime of civilization would topple into a new beginning. And who wants that with the end-time in sight?

Perhaps I have a small problem. I won’t deny my wife split over my incessant clothes hysterics. Why should anyone have to endure the sight of a grown man spitting on the inside windshield of his car while on the way to the Laundromat? But it calmed my nerves even more than throwing my glasses out the window, or flipping the bone to a cow with its head poked through a fence. What did she expect? I wasn’t bad with dishes or a mop. But her rap that doing laundry together would make us equals in the eyes of God and society tried the hell out of me (and her). So she flew the coop. And once the mound in the living room blocked the television, and I accepted the fact my rambunctious friends could care less, I dumped my load on the nearest welfare shrink.

\* \* \*

“What specifically drives you crazy about

laundry?” he asked.

“A number of things,” I said.

“Please tell me about one,” he said.

“OK,” I said. “I can’t stand people telling me to sort the colors from the whites.”

“Why is that?” he asked. “Please be honest and in touch with your feelings.”

“No reason,” I said.

“Oh, there must be a reason,” he said. “Think of your mother. Did she color coordinate you as a child?”

“I don’t remember,” I said.

“You’re blocking the question,” he said. “Think. Did your shirt and socks have to match before you left the house?”

“Look,” I said. “I just cram all the clothes into the same triple loader because I hate laundry.”

“What about your children?” he asked. “Are they comfortable wearing pink underwear?”

“I don’t know what they feel,” I said. “I don’t think it bugs them.”

“Describe a typical trip to the laundromat for me,” he said.

“I’ll do my best,” I said.

“Proceed,” he said.

“It starts off slow,” I said. “Usually things are pretty good around the house. I get home from work, make supper, read the kids some books, blast some music, and play a couple of games of Nerf basketball with them. After that we do our exercises – you know, pushups, sit-ups, squat thrusts, and jumping jacks. It’s a routine that



works. But then it begins to dawn on me something's not right. When it's time to hit the *john*, I can't open the bathroom door all the way. TOWEL BLOCKAGE! Panic sets in. I run to the kids' room and find assorted mountains of jeans, shirts, underwear etc. etc. Then into my own room – drawers in the dresser opened and ravaged. Pants wadded into balls and stuffed into the corners of the room. The creeping odor. The kids begin to sing:

'Daddy, we don't have any clean clothes for school tomorrow.'

'OK, OK,' I say. 'Don't panic. We can make it through one more day. Just find the cleanest stuff you can.'

'Really, Daddy,' my daughter says. 'Really!'

'OK, OK,' I say. 'Just don't bug me.'

Then it happens. The transformation I mean. Something right out of *Jekyll and Hyde*.

'To the Hefty bags!' I scream.

By then sharp horns begin to protrude from my forehead. My teeth grow long and coarse hair covers my face. We go after the laundry – kicking, rolling, and throwing it into a central location before stuffing it into the bags as fast as we can.

'Go on,' I tell the kids. "Drag your bags to the car and get in.'

Then we're off. I race through the streets to the nearest mat, howling at no moon. Once inside, everything about the place nauseates me: the lights, the smell, the discarded boxes of detergent, toddlers crawling on the dirty floors, fat mothers

folding clothes, college students with their eyes glued to sissy books. Trapped, I toss our bags in front of the triple loaders and begin to jam the shit inside, hands shaking like an alcoholic's. The kids try to pitch in, thinking, if everything goes right, they might come out of this with a milkshake or a new plastic toy.

BAM! First loader shut. Eight quarters down the hatch. Add the Cheer.

BAM! Second loader shut. First quarter falls through to Return Change. Try again. Check for FREAKIN' OUT OF ORDER sign. None. Bing again. Fuck it! Temper rising. HOLY SHIT! A brown sock hanging out of the first loader. Soap bubbles and water escaping. Machine light on. Can't be opened. Kicking machine. Pounding on it with both fists. Screaming. Tearing out my hair. People fleeing from the mat. I'm lost...lost.

'HELP ME! PLEASE, SOMEONE HELP ME!'

"That's quite enough, Mr. Hanks," he said. "Please calm down. Get control over yourself. Don't you think you're overreacting to a simple frustration of modern life?"

"Huh," I said, slightly disoriented.

"You're overreacting," he said.

"Don't talk to me about overreaction," I said. "Talk to Adam and Eve about that. They'll fill your ear with some overreactions."

"Yes, Mr. Hanks, I'm sure they could. Would you like to tell me something about them?" he said, flipping on a tape recorder.

“Sure,” I said. “I like to think about...”

# DAY TWELVE



March 2, 1999

Mrs. Eileen Burke  
40 Searle Road  
West Roxbury MA 02132

Dear Mrs. Burke:

In response to our conversation concerning your husband's birthday reception at your home on *Saturday, March 13*, we have prepared the following information for your review:

*Menu Proposal  
General Information  
Estimate of Cost*

Menu is great and I am sure your guess will be pleased. The truck with chef, foods and equipment will arrive between 11:45 and 12:00 while servers will follow at 12:30pm in order to be prepared by 2pm.

We need to know definite number by Thursday morning, March 11, but we will plan on 30 for now.

If you have any questions at all, please feel free to call again at any time.  
Thank you!

Sincerely,

**GOURMET CATERERS INC.**

*Susan Davis*  
Susan Davis  
#617-522-2820 x 612

## GENERAL INFORMATION SHEET

CLIENT: Burke

DATE: Saturday March 13

LOCATION: home

# OF GUESTS: 30

TYPE OF SERVICE: Beverages/Hors d'Oeuvre/Buffer Supper

SERVICE TIMES: 2pm start 3:30pm supper

MENU PRESENTATION: Refer to menu proposal.

FOOD SERVICE PRESENTATION: Gourmet Caterers will provide all **fine china, silver, all serving equipment**, as well as the **Chef and Serving Personnel**.

LINENS: White Buffet Table Linens and Skirting are included in menu price. All other linens are additional and can be ordered in many colors. White Linen Napkins are included.

FURNITURE: We will provide the buffet table (6' oblong or serpentine shaped?) You will move the dining room drop-leaf table into another area for cheese or beverages. If you need any folding chairs, we can rent.

**BAR SERVICE:**

Gourmet will provide glassware for wine & champagne, and plastic cups for beer. We will also supply 2 large plastic tubs for you to use for the cold beverages.

**FLOWERS:**

We can provide decor flowers and greens for any buffet and passing trays.

**We highly recommend:**

- Cedar Grove Gardens #617-825-8582
- Stephanie's #617-469-4747

**CAKE:**

We will order a nice cake – gold cake with chocolate icing—*Happy 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Dick.*

**DATE: 3-13-99**  
**CLIENT: Burke**  
**PROPOSED MENU**

**2:00**

*Hors d'Oeuvre Passed*  
on silver trays decorated with fresh flowers  
*Petite Potato Scallion Pancakes*  
*Lobster Quesadillas*  
*Maine Crab Cakes, cajun remoulade sauce*  
 \*\*  
*Marinated Shrimp wrapped in Pea Pods*  
*Bruschetta of Mozzarella, Tomato, Fresh Basil*

**Silver Trays**

*Wedges of International Cheeses*  
 with  
*french bread, assorted crackers*  
*Whole & Carved Fruits decoration*

3:30pm

**RUFFET DINNER MENU**

*Spinach Mushroom Salad*  
*mandarin oranges, nuts, croutons*  
*sweet sour dressing*

*CHICKEN PICATTA*  
*boneless chicken breasts sauteed in light wine sauce with lemon*  
*capers garnish*

*PENNE PASTA with HEARTY BASIL MARINARA SAUCE*

*Fresh Asparagus*  
*Spring Carrots with ginger glaze*

*rolls, breads*

\*\*\*\*\*

*Dessert Buffet*  
*Coffee, Tea, Brewed Decaffeinated Coffee*  
*Chocolate Dipped Strawberries*  
*(Cake)*

DATE: 3-13-99-----Approx. 2-7pm

SUBJECT: Estimate of Cost

# OF GUESTS: 30

\*\*\*\*\*

20 serv. Cheese/Fruit @ \$2.25	\$ 45.00
120 Hot/Cold Hors d'Oeuvre passed=10 dz. @ \$22	220.00
BUFFET MENU @ \$21.95 per person (Chicken Picatta)	658.50
Cake—Small Birthday-30 servings	52.50

Wage for 1 Chef @ \$125.00	125.00
Wage for 2 Serving Persons @ \$110.00 each (1-6pm)	220.00
Additional Staff Hours @ \$22 per hour	

Furniture—Round Tables for 4 each @ \$8 each  
 Chairs @ \$1.75 each  
 Delivery Charge for Furniture Company to Job Site @ \$25

Linens—Formal White Round sets @ \$15.00 each  
 Accent Color Napkins @ \$0.75

Decor Flowers & Greens for pass trays/buffet @ \$25      Optional

Truck Delivery Charge      45.00

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	1366.50
5% State Tax	68.30
	<u>\$ 1434.80</u>

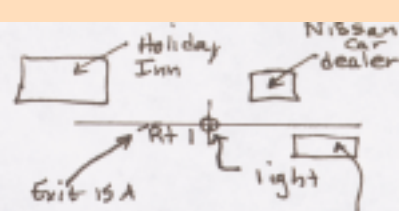
NOTE FREE

(good eats)

## DAY THIRTEEN

Directions to my house for the big bash: next page.

Party at 40 Searle Road: Pale Pink Cape Cod house with wine colored shutters.  
phone: (617) 323-2547



Directions (From the West) : to Hotel:

- Take the Massachusetts Turnpike (Route 90) to Exit 14 (Route 128 / 95) - Note the highway at this point has 2 route numbers, and is different from Rt 495. Do not take Route 495. Stay to the right as you come off ramp.
- After paying the toll, proceed to the right and take Rte. 128 / 95 South. This exit is immediately after toll booths.
- Proceed South on Rte. 95 / 128 to Exit 15 A / Dedham. As you come off exit ramp onto Route 1, you want to move to the far left lane and take a left at the first light. (The Holiday Inn is on the corner with the light on the other side of the highway.)

Directions from Hotel to House:



- Come out of Holiday Inn Parking lot by Nissan dealership and take a left onto Route 1, passing the Cinema, which should be on your right as you make the turn.
- Continue straight on Route 1 through a 3 lights. At 3rd light, move to right lane, and continue straight through this light (Gulf gas station on left = landmark) (Finagle a Bagle on right = landmark) (a 1.2 miles)
- As you pass through light (heavy traffic on Saturdays), at next light, bear right (Towards Roslindale & Forest Hills) (0.1 miles) (onto Washington Street) Mall should be on left.
- Continue on Washington Street (approximately 3.6 miles and through  $\approx$  5 lights) - (Eventually - you will see a Mobil gas station on left when you get near next landmark). After Mobil, move to left lane.
- At next light, take a left onto LaGrange Street. (Brick apt. building with white shutters on corner ← landmark)
- Take 3rd possible left off LaGrange, onto Searle Road (a 0.2 mi.) 40 Searle is on left, a  $\frac{1}{2}$  way down Street.



## NOTES

123. THIRTEEN. Each of the Days falls on the thirteenth line of the page. As I mentioned earlier, I was born on March 13th. We are very close to the big line that should've started my memoir. (*Directions to my house will not get you to my house.*)

## DAY FOURTEEN

### THE DOUGHNUT CHRONICLES

I had to sit on a foam rubber pillow encased in sheepskin during a portion of my fourth decade on earth. I had to sit on it because I had a sore ass. The *doughnut* (as I came to call it) went everywhere with me: to work, to places of recreation and entertainment (ballgames & movies), and on dates with my girlfriend. It was especially hard to bring the *doughnut* on dates with me. Even though I was living with my girlfriend (Eileen) by now, we still went out on what we called dates. I was particularly fearful of falling into a marriage-like rut and advocated active dating during the living together cycle of our relationship that we called *Friends, Roommates, and Lovers*. I wasn't great at the dating game and bringing the *doughnut* along on a date didn't enhance or improve my ability to be a successful "dater." My lack of success on dates with Eileen, as well as women before her, had to do with my proclivity to fall into a *scenes and words* event while on a date. In fact, on my very first date with Eileen back in Binghamton, this Achilles tendon manifested itself while driving to the theatre for some modern dance. I lost my cool when a motorist backed out of his driveway from across the street and entered my lane. Before I knew it, I was half-way out the window, screaming at the guy about his fucking mother and the trials and tribulations she must have gone through raising

such an idiot. I got quite apoplectic about the whole thing and when I turned to Eileen for confirmation and support, she drilled me with disbelieving eyes before handing me a tissue for drool trickling from the corners of my mouth. The fact that I also took her to a theater that wouldn't have modern dance until the next day pretty much assured me that I had lost the battle with this date. But that was nothing next to carrying a *doughnut* under my arm into a fine restaurant and going through the routine of positioning it properly on the chair and letting out a sigh of relief (ah) as soon as I sat down on it. If I just didn't sigh each time I sat down on it, I think I could have pulled off at least one date with her during the time of the *Doughnut Chronicles*. The sigh just zapped her belief in the possibility of a romantic evening.

I believe my ass got sore because I wore polyester underwear while driving around the Northeast for ten years in a Toyota Tercel with black vinyl seats and no air-conditioning in times of blistering heat. I contend the trifecta of polyester, heat, and black vinyl created a dangerous friction in that area of my body, and eventually taxed the skin into a painful soreness due to skin erosion in the ass. I needed help.

The first dermatologist I went to turned out to be a real wacko. Even before I finished with the history of my sore ass and the insightful thoughts about the causes of it, he told me that he could tell me what I had without even asking me to remove my shorts for an examination. He said my scalp

and face gave away my condition. He called it something difficult to remember and pronounce, and then explained it was trunk line psoriasis, which more or less ran down the center of my body. “I bet you’ve got red spots on your chest,” he said. I couldn’t deny that; I had a set of single file, measles-like spots running from sternum to navel before disappearing into a riot of pubic hair. After seeing him, I went to the drugstore to buy the steroid cream prescribed and hoped that the cream, which he personally guaranteed, worked on my ass.

After a few days of *creaming up*, I broke out into a campaign of white sores that spread out from my fanny to my inner thighs. Alarmed, I chose another dermatologist from the yellow pages, and this one told me that the white sores were a typical reaction to the steroid cream I was using. After a complete examination, he told me I had non-specific dermatitis in the rectal area and handed me a tube of cream that would kill the white sores, which turned out to be some kind of fungus. The cream did work on the fungus, but my ass remained sore.

It was after this visit that I bought the *doughnut* in order to gain some relief when sitting down. However, though the *doughnut* worked at ballgames and restaurants, it didn’t work very well in the Tercel. A Tercel is a tiny machine for those without much dough, and when I placed the *doughnut* on the driver’s seat, my head grazed the ceiling of the automobile when I got behind the wheel. Though I’m an average-size guy, I looked or at least felt a little like Herman Munster pulling

into the parking lots of schools for late afternoon language arts workshops with teachers. I needed something else other than the *doughnut* to relieve my sore ass while on educational sojourns around the Northeast.

I discussed my problem with some close friends and one of them suggested *wooden beads*. Not into torture, I couldn’t possibly see how *wooden beads* would benefit a sore ass. But my friend said that a cabby friend of his used them and raved about their effectiveness in preventing and relieving sore and tired butts. So I bought a set of them at an **auto supply store**.

Basically, *wooden beads* are a mat of beads placed on the driver’s seat. I have no idea about the physics and/or the magic of the *beads*, other than that the slight roly-poly action of them under the ass as one drives supposedly blocks or suppresses the formation of a central pressure point on the butt, thus preventing a sore ass from developing. I can’t say I enjoyed the little buggers. Maybe it was because I already had a sore ass that I didn’t experience their acclaimed relief. Plus, they didn’t last too long in the atomic environment of the Tercel. The Tercel was a bitch on hot days and got incredibly “molecular” any time I forgot to crack the windows. Most of the time I remembered this safety procedure, but when I didn’t, the heat index inside the car went **suicidal** like a plate of buffalo chicken wings without the blue cheese dressing to quell the fire on the lips.

The “beads” met their fiery death on a day I was

booked for a workshop with a crew of Long Island elementary school teachers at the Nassau County **BOCES**. It turned out to be an exceptionally warm spring day on the “Island” and in my haste to start the workshop on time (a slight over-sleep at the **Box-0-Sleep**), I neglected to crack the Tercel’s windows before entering the educational facility. After six hours of badgering teachers with the notion of **metacognition** and its role in the reading process, I returned to the nuclear interior of the Tercel to find the plastic strings that threaded and held the beads together had melted, and the poor “beads” were loose and clumped together in the depression my ass had made in the seat over time. Without second thoughts, I brushed the hot beads onto the hot pavement of the parking lot and got into my car. On contact with the vinyl seats, my polyester underwear ignited, and I drove back to Boston (via the Throgs Neck Bridge) in flames.

During my crisis of “soreness,” my family and friends supported me the best that they could. Every now and then my girlfriend consented to carry the *doughnut* in a plastic bag to some event or function in order to give my overall appearance a break upon entering the scene. The bag also helped take some pressure off the “look” of the doughnut. From constant use and sittings, the sheepskin covering was a bit ragged and discolored and did provoke looks of disgust from those without the belly to accept it as part of a social setting. Sheepskin was a pain (in the ass) to wash and dry, so why bring it to a laundromat?

But the end of my first year with a sore ass, I was at wits end with dermatologists and in a constant state of embarrassment over the “grease patches” I left on the chairs and sofas of neighbors and colleagues. No matter what cream or salve a dermatologist prescribed to relieve my suffering, it came with a “grease patch” side effect. Most of the medications came in petroleum jelly base and this accounted for the dreaded “grease patch.” Usually the “patch” imprint was about the size of a half-dollar and was very tough to remove from sofas, chairs, and my pants. I wore only black pants during this time in my life because they hid the leak-through spot on the seat of my pants that other colors presented to my friends, business associates, and strangers caught behind me on escalators and/or on ramps into ball games and rock concerts.

I was a mess and far from the GQ personality I thought I should project in my forties, due to my natural **good looks** and increased income from consultant work and living with a woman who made good bucks and was very generous. Though “who could blame her,” my girlfriend (Eileen) started to manifest symptoms of stress from living with a guy who carried a *doughnut* and left “grease patches” on her furniture. She seemed to withdraw at times from my romantic advances and started to increase her consumption of Miller Lite Beer (tastes great...). We stopped going to restaurants and accepting invitations to holiday and birthday parties. I made accusations of insensitivity. She told

me to wash the damn *doughnut*.

Fortunately, my sister had entered the hunt for a perfect cream, one without fabric side effects. She was a combination of persistent personalities – the detective who tracked the Fugitive, the reporter who followed the Hulk, the French cop who pursued the main character in Hugo’s *Les Miserables*. A lawyer by profession, she knew how to search, question, and interrogate, and quickly keyed in on the medical supply stores in her area. It was a logical move. Medical supply stores generally cater to the elderly and my sister reasoned that they might have a selection of creams to choose from on their shelves. She was right and found a skin protection cream that was non-greasy and guaranteed to work on the most persistent skin maladies. It was an over-the-counter medication and tons cheaper than the prescribed creams the dermatologists had me on. She gave me the address of the store and I ordered a case of the cream over the phone by Visa card.

It worked like magic. After six months of use, I was off the *doughnut* and back into colorful pants. My girlfriend came back into my arms and bought me an armful of cotton boxer shorts. During a second bottle of Merlot one Friday evening, she convinced me to replace the black vinyl seats in the Tercel with a more friendly cloth seat. She quoted a price from an auto supply store after an exceptional warm embrace, and I consented to spend the money for them. I even knew what I had – something called **Intertrigo**. A dermatologist at

the **Guthrie Clinic** had informed me of that and felt there was no harm in using the medical supply store cream as long as it brought me relief. My ass was still sore, but I was controlling the flammable conditions in my car and living a *doughnut*-free life. Things were looking up.

Around this time, I met a mysterious woman who had a thorough knowledge of children’s literature and a talent for turning teachers onto it. She was so good that I began hiring her for a portion of my literacy work around New York State. On occasion, we drove together to a school for a literacy workshop, and during a trip to NYC, we fell into a conversation about health and ailments of the human body. I told her about my sore ass and she grew alarmed after I told her about the skin protectant that I used daily so I could drive to places like NYC. Her alarm was based on the fact the cream contained aluminum hydroxide. She told me how toxic aluminum was and that I should stop using it immediately. I told her that I had my own concerns about aluminum but that my girlfriend reminded me when I started acting really “hypo” that Budweiser came in aluminum cans. The woman scoffed at this and felt I was being flippant about good health. She said she had a friend that she was romantically involved with who was a holistic healer and could cure my sore ass in a natural way. He practiced his healing arts under a shingle of chiropractry in Ithaca, New York. She encouraged me to see him.

Ithaca is gorges (sic). I had spent some time

living there with my kids during the break-up of my first marriage. It wasn't much of a detour from my normal route of Boston to Rochester, Rochester to Binghamton, Binghamton to Long Island, and Long Island back to Boston. I made an appointment with my mysterious friend's lover and drove to see him on a blustery day in March while I was booked for some workshops in Binghamton. His office was in the basement of a brick building that rested at the foot of one of the giant hills leading up to Cornell University.

His name was Dr. Dudley, and he was an interesting cat. After a few minutes in the reception area, filling out a medical history form, I entered his office. Dudley was seated behind a large oak desk when I entered, and when he stood up to greet me, I saw that he was big man, well over 6'5", thin, and at least ten years younger than me. He had a keen look of intelligence in his blazing brown eyes, and when he shook my hand and inquired about the ride to see him, I noticed that he had a hiccup in his voice – a vocal tic of some sort that made the words jump from his mouth like frogs leaping over one another and/or a needle jumping a bad groove on an old LP. As he launched into asking me about my problem and its history, I looked around the room. There were medical cabinets on two of the walls. These were filled with vials of various substances and closed boxes of various sizes. There was a chiropractor's table in the center in the room, but I didn't see any diploma announcing his successful completion of

chiropractic courses. There was a diploma on the wall above his desk that indicated he had a BA in psychology from Boston University. After absorbing the details of my medical history, he asked me to unbutton my shirt, jump up on the table, and lie on my back. He opened one of the cupboards and retrieved a black box about the size of the smallest Whitman's sampler drugstores carry in great numbers prior to Valentine's Day. He set the box down at the end of the table and took a prolonged look at me as I lay flat out on the table. I felt uncomfortable until he spoke.

"Helen says you're a poet. Do you like Wallace Stevens?" he said.

"Yeah, I do," I said.

"Can you recite his poem, *Mere Being*, for me?" he said.

(Fire-fangled feathers dangling down ran through my mind. After that I drew a blank.)

"No," I said.

"I could if I wanted to," he said. "I write verse too. Formal verse. None of that free verse shit. Sonnets. Strictly iambic pentameter for me."

I made a note to never give my mysterious friend another poem and resisted the impulse to kick this neo-formalist in the balls.

"That's good." I said. "I hear iambic pentameter is making a strong comeback."

"So you have a sore ass," he said.

"Bingo," I said.

He picked up the box and opened it. Inside there were magnets of assorted sizes. Without

hesitation, he began placing them on key spots on my belly and chest. Both my nipples and belly button were covered with them. They felt cold and produced a tingling sensation in my skin.

“These magnets will confirm what I already suspect as the culprit of your sore ass,” he said.

He left the magnets in place and walked around the table to view them from different perspectives. He didn’t say anything to me. On the count of three, he rushed toward me and picked the magnets off me as quickly as possible. He put them back in the box and returned the box to the cupboard. He told me to button my shirt and get off the table and into the chair beside his desk. He didn’t need to look at my ass. I did what he asked.

Once he positioned himself in the leather chair behind his desk, he was ready to share his diagnosis of my condition with me. A benign look filtered into his eyes. He picked up a pencil and tapped the eraser three times on the desk. Frogs started leaping out of his mouth.

“The magnets have confirmed my suspicions from the moment I saw you,” he said.

“Yes,” I said. “What is it?”

“You have a large and very unfriendly fungus living in your colon,” he said. “The fungus is responsible for your sore ass.”

I gulped as I processed the information. But I didn’t draw a blank like I did with Stevens. A joke popped into my mind. I gave it a shot.

“A mushroom walks into a bar and orders a drink. The bartender looks at the mushroom and

says: “We don’t serve mushrooms in here.” Why not the mushroom says, “I’m a fun guy.”

“This is serious,” he said.

“Unfriendly,” I said.

“Yes,” he said. “It’s making your ass sore. Once we kill it, you’ll be OK.”

“So what do I have to do,” I said.

“Two things,” he said. “First, you must change your diet. No more white flour, milk, cheese, or refined sugar. Period. Second, you must take the vitamins, substances, and minerals I tell you take without question and religiously. My receptionist will fix you up with those on your way out. In a month come back and we’ll see what the magnets say. They don’t lie. Humans do, not them.”

I’m in the mood to say the receptionist was a nice piece of ass, but won’t. She was cute and reminded me of a woman I met on an Amtrak train traveling from NYC to New Orleans, years before. I was alone at the time, in between marriages, and had great hopes and fantasies of meeting a woman on the train. I was starved for romance and quick love. As luck would have it, a gorgeous, young woman sat down beside me. I bided my time and kept my mouth shut until the train left the station to make my move. When she pulled out a copy of Marquez’s *One Hundred Years Of Solitude*, I knew that gambling away all the money I had on a riverboat, once I got to New Orleans, was the right thing to do. The stars were in line. I knew Marquez. I knew his grandmother used to wake him up in the middle of the night and

whisper to him that their kitchen had filled up with blue butterflies. My own mother used to sneak into my room at night to shake holy water on me and pin packets of sacred rose petals to my pillow. I was born with a magical realism mind. However, before I had the chance to finish my first sentence with the word *Marquez* in it, the cute woman next to me brushed me off by telling me she was a lesbian. I was stunned and retorted: "I'm an **ex-Catholic**." She liked that and we went to the club car for a round of beers. We played cards and snuggled together during moments of sleep. Then she got off in Atlanta. I was in love, but it didn't matter.

The receptionist wore the same red-framed glasses as the fiery lesbian on the train. But now I was spoken for and the book she was reading, *Candida Fungus & the Colon*, didn't offer me any opening lines. We stayed official. I approached her desk like a typical patient: obsequious, timid, alarmed, and thankful. I waited for her to finish the page she was reading before speaking. A few minutes passed by before I spoke. When I did, she set down the book and offered me a laconic smile.

"Dr. Dudley said you would know what pills I need to take," I said.

"What did he say you had," she said.

"Fungus in the colon," I said.

This seemed to inspire her. Her eyes came to life within the red-framed glasses like two tropical fish lost in the rainbows of each other. She surfaced and rattled off the names of vitamins, minerals, roots,

herbs, and powders that I needed to take. Though expensive, I could purchase them directly from her. They would do the job.

"Are there any side-effects?" I asked.

"Not really," she said. "Well, there is one I know about because I use to have a fungus in the colon."

"What?" I said.

"Once you take all this stuff your feet will become severely itchy for a few weeks."

"Why?" I said.

"Because the fungus will exit through your toes," she said.

I had had enough.

"No thank you," I said.

"Are you sure?" she said. "Fungus is bad for you."

"Adios," I said.

She shook her head at me like Joe Friday and I nodded mine back at her. ("It's a shame, Joe, you know...that colon fungus"). I left the office and entered a snow squall whipping through the streets of Ithaca. It was not in my best interest to get in the car, so I walked around until I found a diner made of white flour and sugar. Once inside, I ordered a big piece of apple pie with two scoops of vanilla ice cream. I had the waitress slap some cheese on it, even though I hated cheese. I even dropped a lump of sugar in my coffee. Take that you dirty fungus, I **thought**.



## NOTES

124. auto supply. See poem.

### BEFORE THE ALARM

There is no time to report  
on the workings of the brain

Someone is in the cellar  
Confusion defines the scenario

I am not you  
but you are me

The shoe is full of ants  
The hurricane leaves the auto parts store  
standing

I want more sleep  
A quick fix of guitar in the corner to play

A way to strum sidewalks  
like dogs and owners

Strolling into banks  
with plastic shovels

Loan this  
loan that

Build a blue highway in the middle  
of the next sentence

And there are salmon detours  
with birds resting at marble rest stops

It's the value in heads  
soft doctors whisper

as they open valves  
bleed rust

return to the panic of thin neckties  
before the alarm

(from *Marks*, the forty-seventh publication of  
the Backwood Broadsides Chaplet Series. To  
order it or subscribe to the series contact:

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Sylvester Pollet  
963 Winkumpaugh Rd.  
Ellsworth, ME 04605 – 9529)

125. suicidal. There used to be a bar on **Clinton Street** in Binghamton called **Amp's**, which sold the ultimate suicidal wings. Once my friend, **Barney Bush**, ordered a plate of them with a certain amount of bravado. Barney knew hot food from living in New Mexico and scoffed at the notion of a plate of wings in Binghamton that could do him in. But Bingo is a tough place and Amp's wings burned the hell out of Barney's lips. He called it quits after six or seven of those wicked wings.

Barney is a member of the Shawnee tribe and a

great friend of mine and other poets and artists in Binghamton. During the eighties and nineties, he came to town to do poetry workshops in the schools and readings at Swat's during the days of the Big Horror Poetry Series. It was always great when Barney came to town.

Another fascinating food incident with Barney occurred at the **Belmar**. The Belmar was another dive bar on Main Street, and the Binghamton Community Poets used to go to there after one of our poetry readings. The owners of the bar, a couple we called Stan and Helen, thought at first were members of a **bowling team**. It was hard to distinguish us from alley rats during that period of time. I still remember how hard Helen slapped her forehead when we walked into the place. With a big grin on her face she said: "Here comes the bowling team!"

The Belmar served an unusual **pizza** with a **Velveeta cheese** topping, but it didn't take too many beers (no booze for Barney) before we ordered a few of them. On the night we were there with Barney, Frank, a part-time bartender, was filling in for Helen and Stan. He was an old-timer, with a gruff face and voice, who scowled at patrons through a pair of magnifying lens in thick black frames that straddled the bridge of his nose when taking an order. It was a hassle for him to come over to our table, which just happened to be in the shape of an isosceles triangle. Besides the padded walls of the place, I was crazy for the geometric tables that lived in a kind of wonderland away from

the hard-core drinking going on at the bar. There was a collection of tables in basic geometric patterns, including a hexagon as well as the square, circle, and rectangle, around the bar. It was just another **twilight zone** effect that Binghamton was famous for.

Frank was a growler and let us have it when he reached our table.

"What do you want?" he said.

Barney looked up at him with a kind amusement radiating from his face.

"What kind of toppings can we get on a pizza?" he said, in his deep and booming voice.

Frank took a step back and considered Barney like an insipid puzzle. He tapped his foot then glanced at the ceiling for help. This caused Barney to let loose a hearty and resounding laugh.

"Well?" Barney said to Frank.

"I don't list the damn toppings to no one. It's obvious. Just name what you want."

Barney laughed again and looked over at me. I took a sip of my beer and smiled.

"OK, then," Barney said. "We'll take three pizzas smothered with pepperoni and black olives."

Frank adjusted his coke bottle glasses for a real close look at Barney. His eyes like pitted bowling balls wobbled in their alleys. He shook his head with disgust and let out a big sigh.

"Now where do you think I'm going to get black olives from?" he said. "Do you think I'm going to shit them out of my ass?"

Barney roared. The Belmar was a happening

place.

**126. BOCES.** Stands for the Board of Cooperative Educational Services.

**127. Box-O-Sleep.** Personal generic name for all the cheap motels I slept in during my years on the road.

**128. metacognition.** Above cognition. Thinking about thoughts. What you read. How you make meaning.

**129. good looks.** For Bill Kemmett: I am a handsome man. You're a good-looking man.

**130. Les Miserables.** Another treat for you dear reader. If I ever get a website and you figure out how to access it, I will send you a free copy of *White Man Appears on Southern California Beach*, if you can name the US Marshal that dogged Richard Kimble, the reporter that dogged the Hulk, and the Inspector that dogged Jean Valjean in Hugo's book.

**131. Intertrigo.** Sounds like a parkway or the name of a bridge. Means an irritation of the skin caused by skin rubbing against skin. Think of skin folds or wherever the skin touches itself.

**132. Guthrie Clinic.** Quite a drive from Boston. Located in Sayre, PA.

**133. ex-Catholic. Right.**

**134. thought. Fan Pants:** loose fitting pants for men. Made of linen and oversized at the crotch area to permit billowing...tapered legs. Inside pants: tiny plastic fans inside silk pouches. When the genital area gets too hot, men have the option to turn on the fans. Fans electrically controlled by buttons on stylish belt that comes with the pants. Just one capitalistic thought that came out of the self-inflicted pain caused by matching polyester underwear with black vinyl seats.

**135. Clinton Street.** Famous Binghamton Street in the First Ward. Known for bars and churches. In its heyday Clinton Street had 25 bars or so in three to four blocks. Famous for the *Clinton Street Run* – a birthday tradition requiring the celebrant(s) to drink a shot and a beer at as many bars as possible before passing out. Clinton Street resembles Dorchester Ave in Boston though it's a lot smaller and reflects an Eastern European influence rather than an Irish heritage.

**136. Barney Bush.** Check this poet out.

*Books* BY BARNEY BUSH:

*Inherit the Blood*, Thunder's Mouth Press

*Petroglyphs*, The Greenfield Review Press

*My Horse and A Jukebox*, UCLA through Native

American Studies

*Longhouse of the Blackberry Moon*, Ethnic Studies, New Mexico, Highlands University, Las Vegas.

And the two-volume CD: *Remake of the American Dream* with Tony Hymas, The Shawnee Nation United Remant Band Drum, Tony Coe and Edmond Tate Nevaquaya. nato, Paris, 1992.

**137. Belmar.** Also on the Vintage Swat's tape you can see Joel Dailey (check this poet out) reading his poem "Beerheads from Outer Space." The Belmar is mentioned in the poem. Dailey's first full volume of poetry, *Lower 48*, was recently published (April, 1999) by Lavender Ink Press, New Orleans, LA. Anselm Hollo's back cover blurb reads:

"My philosophy - velocity!" says Joel Dailey (in "Infection, Detection, Rejection"), and it serves him both well and right! The poems in this book have more exclamation points, visible and invisible, than the collected works of Alexander Dumas the Elder. Perfect for both space and time capsules, they embody the delirious overamped atmosphere of Y2K US, "where the rubber fits snugly over the arching banana.../where the Sunned & the Stunned wait/for excrement to happen." On a planet entranced by Amerikana, Joel Dailey's works are bound for international and eventually intergalactic acclaim! No question! And questions? No? Well, then (to mildly paraphrase Doc Williams), fasten your seatbelts, ladies and

gentlemen, we are going to laugh like hell!

#### JOEL DAILEY DISCOGRAPHY

<i>Hours of Fun</i>	Blank Gun Silencer, 1996
<i>Release Window</i>	Semiquasi Press, 1996
<i>Public Storage</i>	Norton Coker Press, 1995
<i>Doppler Effects</i>	Shockbox Press, 1993
<i>Audience, Ambience, Ambulance</i>	Blank Gun Silencer, 1993
<i>Angry Red Blues</i>	Acre Press, 1986
<i>Current</i>	02 Press, 1983
<i>Mars, 1954</i>	Rumba Train Press, 1979
<i>First Crescent</i>	Stardancer publications, 1976
<i>Positions</i>	Morgan Press, 1976
<i>Exploring Another Leg</i>	Pentagram Press, 1975

**138. bowling team.** Tom Kolpakas, Binghamton musician, poet, artist, carpenter, rug installer, pool table restorer, **astrologist**, and whole food entrepreneur can be seen reading his poem, "Bowling Shoes," on the Binghamton Community Poets' video: Vintage Swat's: Big Horror Poetry Series 1987 - 1990. The poem was also published in issue 14/15 Fell Swoop: Big Horror Reader.

#### BOWLING SHOES

Huge things on the planet  
Are invisible to the naked eye  
So  
Get your shoes

And let's go bowling.

Tom Kolpakas

**139. pizza.** The best pizza in Binghamton (hands down) is Corteze's pizza. Corteze Restaurant is located on Robinson Street on the Eastside of Binghamton. Corteze's pizza beats out Regina's in the North End. "For the pizza that pleases, try Corteze's." On the box...Sicilian style.

**140. Velveeta.** I hope to have both the Martin and Flanagan genealogy trees for my memoir before completion of it. Recently, my sister sent me the Flanagan tree. For your information, I'm the middle child in a family of three children. I have an older sister, Joanne, who is a lawyer (as I mentioned) who practices law in Canton, New York. She's married to Bradford J. Novak, and they have a teenage daughter, Jessica. My younger brother, Jim, is a great tennis player and a professional tennis instructor who manages the Tennis Club at Grand Central Station. Jim is also a rocker and student of eastern thought. As I kid, he lived on Velveeta cheese and hot dogs. He was until the team moved from Cleveland a wicked Brown's fan. See Appendix R.

**141. twilight zone.** Rod Sterling grew up in Binghamton and graduated from Binghamton Central High School.

**142. paraphrase Doc Williams.** William Carlos Williams introduces Allen Ginsberg's, *Howl*. The last line of the introduction reads: "Hold back the edges of your gowns, Ladies, we are going through hell."

**143. Doppler Effects.** Dear Joel, Where did you come up with the title *Doppler Effects* for your 1993 Shockbox Press chapbook? May I suggest from my poem "Doppler Effect" on page 38 of my *White Man Appears on Southern California Beach*. **Blue** cigarettes my ass. Your friend, Marty.

#### DOPPLER EFFECT

Sitting in a Camero.  
The smell of love and liquor  
on the seats  
saxophone tales of New Jersey  
on the 8 track.  
Jack and his Blues  
and Buddha  
on my lap  
waiting for a friend  
outside the LA Times.  
Thinking: Buddha has been shot  
on 405 the message  
flashed on smog alert signs:  
JOIN THE TREND  
CARPOOL WITH A FRIEND.  
Thinking: Emptiness  
is serious

I gaze out the window  
at the mythology of moths  
and orange flowers.  
Strangers pass.  
AM FM lunch pails  
suitcase cassettes  
plugged into ears.  
And I without a fifth  
or patriarch  
the mirror of mind  
salted with petrochemical dust  
lost in the Doppler Effect  
of Enlightenment.

**144. astrologist.** I'm a Pisces. Tom Kolpakas did my chart. See Appendix S.

**145. Howl.** I met Allen Ginsberg at the Big Tree Inn in Geneseo, New York, in 1980. As you remember, I was tossed from this place for saying "fuck" in a conversation while waiting for a roast beef dinner. I met Mr. Ginsberg before this incident (I believe) and because I was invited by my friend, Dave Kelly, (resident poet at SUC at Geneseo) to join him, Ginsberg, Peter Orlovsky, and few other local poets for lunch before Allen's reading. I ended up sitting across from Mr. Ginsberg and after really digging into his soup, he paused and looked across the table at me. Then he said: "What do you do?" I told him I was an elementary school teacher in the next town over. I mentioned that I wrote poetry.

"What about," he said. I said that I just finished writing about my experiences as a hospital orderly. "Where did you work as an orderly," he said. "Mostly in Binghamton." I said. He looked over at Peter Orlovsky and said: "Peter isn't your brother in a hospital in Binghamton?" "Yes, Allen," Peter said. "He's in Binghamton State Hospital." Then he went back to his soup. After the reading, he signed my May 1980 edition of *Howl* from City Lights. He drew a flower around the O in *Howl* and either wrote his initials in the O or wrote AH. He also wrote -W. Whitman- under the quote:

"Unscrew the locks from the doors! Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs!"

**146. blue cigarettes.** Joel Dailey and I wrote a poem with the title "blue cigarettes" and have claimed for the last twenty years that we stole the title from each other. We don't have lives! We're *Fell Swoopers!*

**147. Jack.** Only reference to Jack Kerouac.

**148. Buddha.** See poem.

#### ALL IS MISUNDERSTANDING

She thinks I'm the Buddha  
because my belly  
pops over my belt buckle

I tell her

it's from 20 yrs. of drinking

She likes to take off  
her clothes  
and run around the apartment  
screaming: Buddha Buddha

I don't deserve  
this  
Some think  
I'm lying  
or just plain stupid

Buddha Buddha  
she screams

(from *Modulations*, p. 61)

**149. Emptiness.** Question 4 from *Cafe Review*  
interview (Summer, 1999)

**Wayne:** Milarepa once said, "The notion of Emptiness engenders Compassion." Emptiness seems to be a recurring theme in much of your own work. Would you agree?

**Richard:** How about this from **Rilke**: "Fling the emptiness out of your arms into the spaces we breathe." This is a tough question because I think emptiness does engender compassion but I'm not sure if I see emptiness as a recurring theme in my work - more of a theme to me would be

meaninglessness and/or absurdity. Now I think both of these concepts - feelings can produce compassion for others and also bump one along into a fuller awareness of Emptiness. As in Buddha's enlightenment...the zone of physics...the whole philosophical tradition of appearance vs. reality. I guess in my work, I've tried to show at times the holes in all of us. The holes in our love for each other. The holes in our work and social relationships. The holes in our political views. The holes in our world and selves. There is some emptiness here. And though I've been hard and direct in writing about these holes at times, I have not let go of humor and compassion but rather see it growing in myself and work.

**150. Rilke.** See poem below.

BATON

I'm reading about Rilke's life  
Munching on taco chips with hot salsa.

Not really.

Yesterday on the beach  
With a friend  
I found a stone  
With information pertaining  
To my birth.

Easy enough to decode

I streaked above the sea  
And vanished  
Like a shooting star  
In the mind of a whale.  
Preposterous!

That's what I thought, too  
And slapped my hand.

But it's not like  
I'm smashing China plates  
And gluing fragments  
On the sides of abstract houses.

Take a sip of beer.  
Twirl pen between fingers.  
Think.

Have you ever noticed that  
First grade students stop writing  
When they reach the end of the first page?

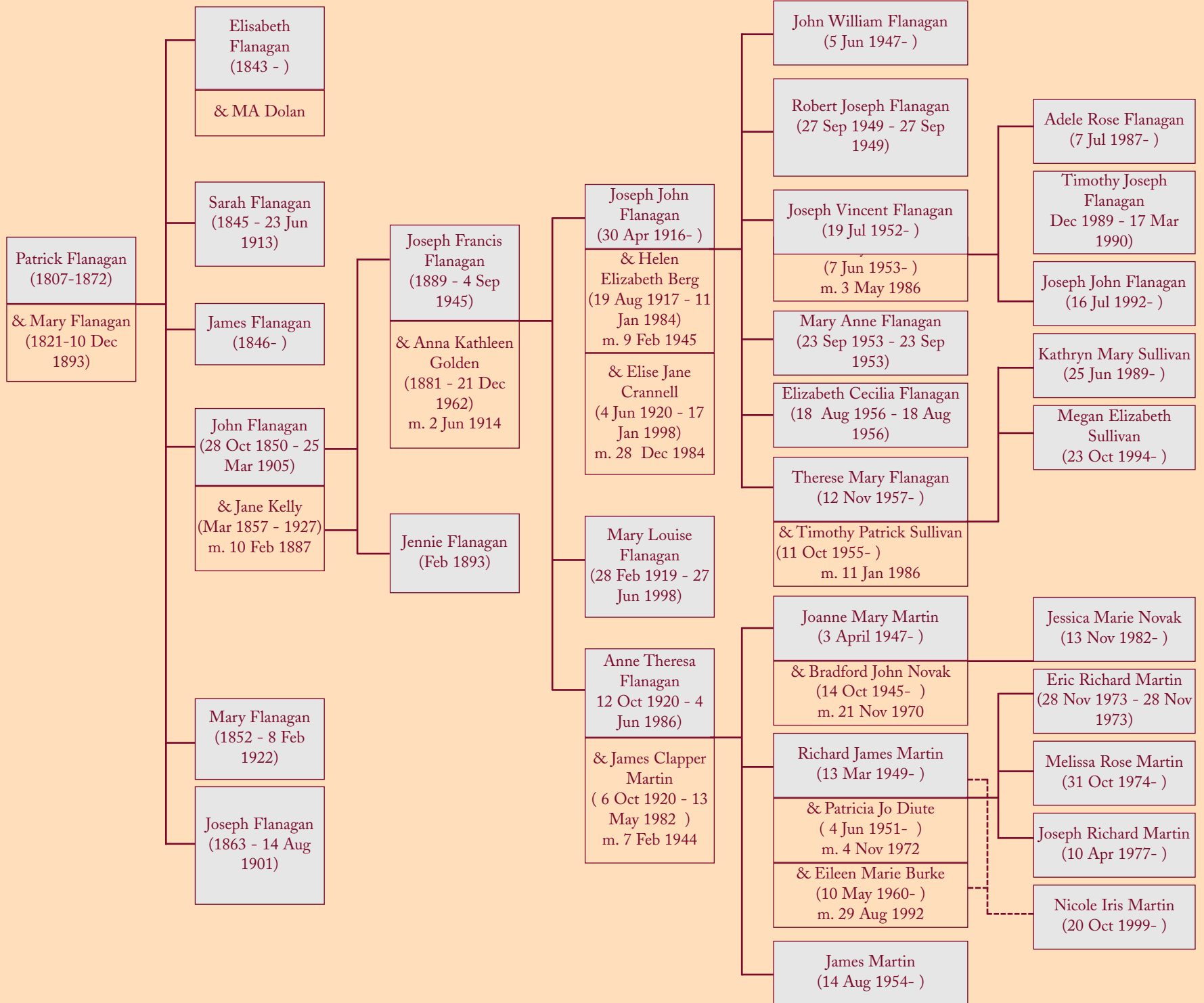
It's a fact.  
Rilke's wife, Clara, danced  
Across the deck of a ship  
And burned her feet.

There's no next page.



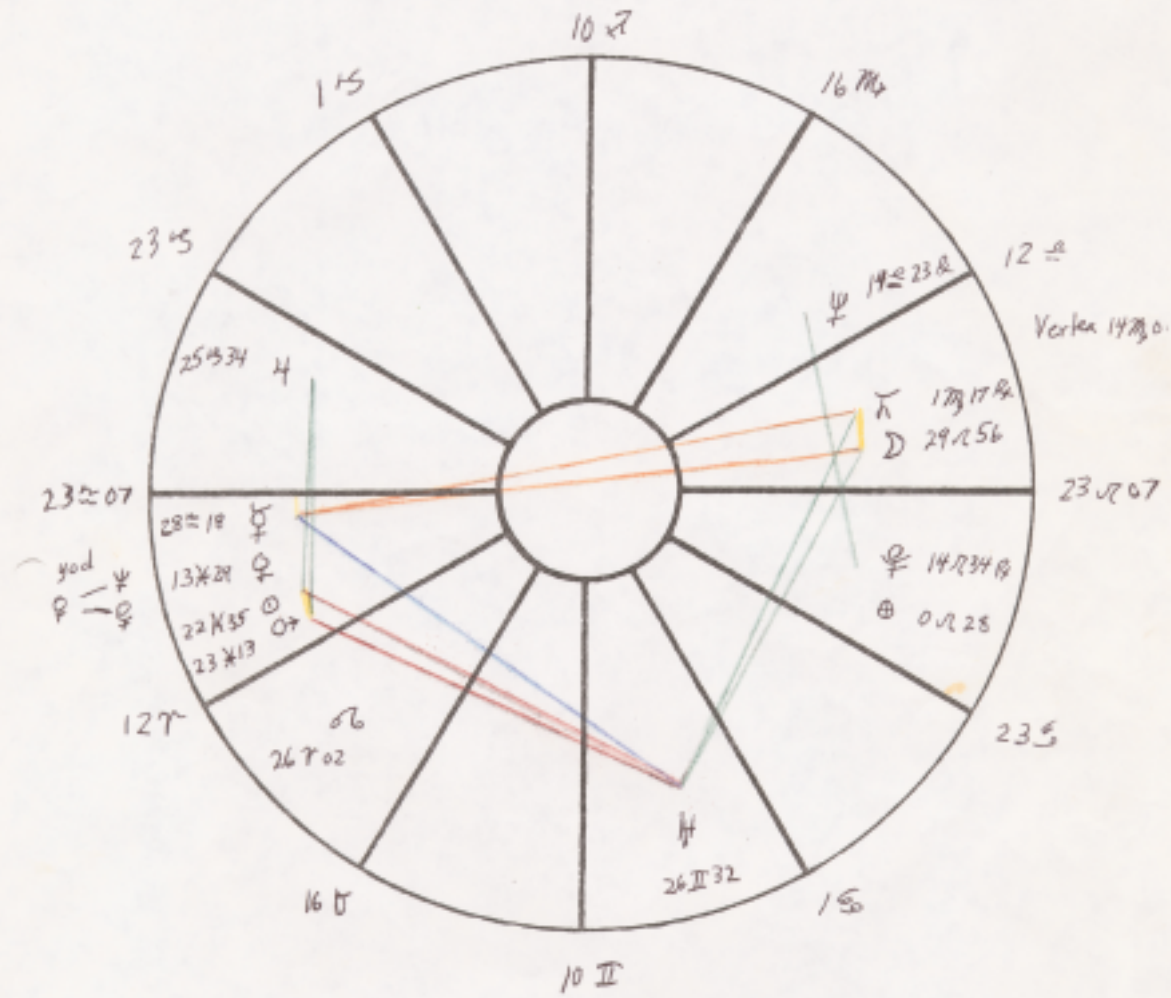


# APPENDIX R



# APPENDIX S

Dick Martini  
 3/13/49 5:15 am Binghamton, NY  
 ST 16:33:1



3W  
 3A  
 2F  
 2E

## DAY FIFTEEN

I'm a big fan of William Carlos Williams and I like the way his name reduces to the abbreviation WCW. It's good to have a name that looks good as an abbreviation and of all the poets I know and/or read, I think Mr. Williams' abbreviated name is the best.

Abbreviations and acronyms are big in the culture. Any one of you reading this could probably list a page of acronyms you use everyday right now. I used to be the lead consultant for the **CIMS/LA** Project in New York. Now I'm banding together with a bunch of coaches who are critical of the **IDR** in Boston. The abbreviation for my name is RJJM (Richard James James Martin). RJJM is not as visually appealing as WCW but is better than CIMS/LA or IDR. It's a matter of taste.

The second James in my full name is my Confirmation name. I have no specific memory of what possessed me to add another James to my name with so many options available to me in the Fifties. **Sputnik** would have been a better choice than James, as in: Richard James Sputnik Martin. RJSM has a nice look to it. A lot of kids in my class at St. Patrick's Academy took Fabian and Elvis for their Confirmation names. I wasn't cool enough for that, but over the years I did refer to myself as Richard James (to the first power) Martin or sometimes just Richard James (primed) Martin. Of course, I was ridiculed for that and spent some time in the office writing my name on a chalkboard

for retaliating when an Elvis or Fabian pulled my hair. My parents saw all this coming and tried to dissuade me from taking my middle name as a Confirmation one but failed to gain my approval.

The nuns and priests at the Academy weren't too happy about my choice either. The confirming bishop was downright hostile to it. Instead of a slight slap to the cheek when conferring the sacrament on me, he nearly knocked me off the marble railing with a blow to my cheek. None of the Fabians or Elvises got a blow like mine. They all received the more appropriate slight slap to the cheek. I was the one who was all shook up. **Sorry about that chief.**

Confirmation made me a soldier of Christ. I never went for that description. Though I respect Christ and what he stands for – namely, a revolutionary kindness to others and self with the direct realization that the kingdom of God is inside of us – I never dug the soldier concept. Though the fact of personal divinity eludes me most of the time, I applaud the great seers across the ages who were able to see the grand connection among all things. I have my own days of insight and **immanence** and brief glimpses of connected and enlightened reality dart through my mind.

This morning Eileen told me she was **pregnant**. I turn fifty years old tomorrow.

## NOTES

151. **Carlos.** I intend no disrespect to Mr. Williams for including the poem below. As I said, I'm a big fan of his work and without him and Walt Whitman where would any of us American speech poets find ourselves today? I learned to talk – to use the lingo of the land – on a playground. All my poetry comes from the playground in one way or another. The poem below was written by two American teenage girls in the town of **Caledonia**, New York, during the early nineties. Caledonia, Caledonia, what makes your big head so hard? I was in Caledonia for a poetry workshop on behalf of my good friend, **Sylvia Kelly**. I wish the girls had signed their name to their piece. The poem evolved from a poetic listening assignment I gave to a tenth grade class. I asked the students to jot down any words or phrases out of the mouths of friends and strangers that they heard and were interested in as they made the rounds around the school. Thanks, girls, wherever you are.

### CHICKEN

Hello my name is Carlos  
Hello my name is Sanchez  
Together we are Carlos Sanchez  
We are American girls  
We're on a new diet  
Nothing but – CHICKEN!  
But the chicken's in the tail  
And the tail's gone

It doesn't matter  
Our hobbies are collecting rare smoked sausages  
And we like to make cheese whistles  
What's wrong with her?  
I don't know  
What's wrong with her?  
I don't know  
What's wrong with you?  
Are you looking at us?  
Barefeet, what are you talking about?  
We have shoes on  
The jokes on me  
It's a circle  
Didn't we introduce ourselves?  
Hello my name is Carlos  
Hello my name is Sanchez  
Together we are Carlos Sanchez  
We are American girls  
We're on a new diet  
Nothing but – CHICKEN!  
But the chicken's in the tail  
And the tail's gone  
They must not be looking at us!

152. **CIMS/LA.** Comprehensive Instructional Management Systems/Language Arts. It's tempting to tell the tale behind this acronym. But I'm leaving it up to Bern Mulligan. It's up to him to write that story. It's a riot. For me it started with the **pepperoni** shirt.

153. **IDR.** In-Depth Review. An external

accountability review process that the Boston Public Schools is presently using to put the heat on schools to improve.

**154. Sorry about that chief.** Only reference to Maxwell Smart.

**155. immanence.** See poem.

#### ENCOUNTER

Each morning we discuss my age and IQ.  
I'm older now and my brilliance  
Once the fodder of talk show hosts  
Lives as a trophy on the mantel  
With your dog show awards.

I could spell almost anything.  
Words like *metonymy* and *eurythmy*  
Were my specialty from birth.  
They just entered my mind like important ideas  
While Mom powdered her face

Or vacuumed the rugs.  
Ideas we like to consider  
During remarkable celestial events:  
Like strange blinking lights in the sky.  
Remember the set we saw

That night in the desert  
During our annual campaign for greater  
Nudity in dry climates.

Key ideas like *transcendence* and *immanence*.  
The history of our involvement

As green plants or underwater specimens.  
Your belief in the transmigration of whales.  
My own commitment to comedy and the  
afterlife.

Conversation defines us.  
Sometimes when the word "random"

Pops from our mouths simultaneously  
We stop to fill notebooks with  
Serendipitous words: *cerulean*, *crepuscular*  
Because we met while walking  
Blue-eyed dogs at twilight.

**156. pregnant.** Eileen could have waited and told me in front of all my friends and relatives coming to the party tomorrow. She could have waited until I penned the line that should have started my memoir. But she didn't. She had her reasons. What if I passed-out or freaked-out in front of friends and family? What kind of party would that have been? I don't think that would have happened. But I'm not that sure. I'll admit to a pretty heavy "knee wobble" the moment she said the word "pregnant," but I didn't go down and crack my head against anything or go nuts. Sure, I was surprised but not overly so. I knew there was a pretty good chance that she would get pregnant the moment she challenged my "manhood" a couple of months ago.  
We had been going back and forth about having

a child for quite some time. Her biological clock had a few safe ticks left and she needed a response. I had always lived in the land of a great big maybe about this and as I approached fifty I felt more and more that **no way** had gobbled up **maybe**. I already had **two great kids** from my first marriage, and now with them both in their twenties, I saw a big “open” space in front of me. I deserve that space, I told myself. I had earned it after experiencing both the joys and trials of raising kids. I needed a blank horizon in front of me – one without responsibility and the time required to be an effective and loving parent. Plus, my ride through raising kids had been all over the place and I had pretty much ended up as a single father through a great deal of it. But Eileen (though a great friend to my children) had never experienced motherhood and now after 13 years in the corporate world was ready for the change a family brings into one’s life. With all this in mind, I remained on a hook of chicken, scaredy-cat, and outright wimp. But once she challenged my **boys**, a second run at fatherhood was a fait accompli.

I’ve always been up for a challenge and came from a family that enjoyed making deals with each other in order to accomplish things. So to make the decision easier for me and to correct her wayward thinking about my “boys,” I offered Eileen a counter challenge. “Look,” I said. “I don’t appreciate the view you have of my “boys”, so I’ll tell you what I’m going to do. I’ll bet you your brand new car that my “boys” will have you

pregnant within two months.”

Because Eileen is a real gamer, she took the challenge and we shook hands on it. The “boys” came through (like I knew they would) and now at the moment of truth (as I mentioned I was a bit stunned), I had the wherewithal to hold out my hands for the keys of her **1999 Honda Accord**. With a smile on her face, she coughed up the keys and I was off to work in set of wheels befitting my nearly 1/2 century on the planet.

**157. Caledonia.** Caledonia is a small town in western New York. It’s only about 10 miles from Avon, which is the town in which my career in elementary education began. I’ve been to Caledonia High School a couple of times for poetry workshops. Most of the time, I eat alone on the road in restaurants that have an early bird special. I like eating with the old folks. I wrote a poem on a napkin one evening while sipping on CC and soda and waiting for my early bird special to arrive. At the time I had been reading Charles Bernstein’s *Dark City*. I enjoyed the read and the year before had invited Bernstein to read at the Big Horror. He turned out to be an OK guy. I took him out for a **speidi** at Poncho’s Pit before the reading. I read a few poems that night to the audience before he came on. He said to me that he dug them and that he didn’t say that very often to people. Of course, I don’t consider myself a language poet, though when Coffee House **rejected** a manuscript of mine a number of years ago (after being

seriously interested in it), Allan Kornblum suggested that I send my work to The Figures Press. The poem I wrote on the napkin was my response to and/or review of *Dark City*. See *Modulations*, pp. 96-98. Yes, I would like you to purchase the book. I'll even sign it for you. See directions to my house – Day 13.

158. **Sylvia Kelly.** Wife of Dave Kelly. Writer, teacher, and holy atheist.

159. **sausages.** See Appendix T.

160. **pepperoni.** Pepperoni, Pepperoni, Pepperoni, Pepperoni, Pepperoni, Pepperoni, PeppERONI. See Appendix U.

161. **Smart.** *The cosmos is chaos and the winos rejoice.* From “Quandaries,” *Modulations*, p. 78. (Sorry about that chief, I lied.)

162 **IQ.** If I could've only rotated a cube in my mind when under pressure, I'd be a rocket scientist today. Eye cue.

163. **two great kids.** See poems.

#### JUST PRETEND

for Joey

A child says:

let's pretend  
he's shot in New York City  
that it's dark  
as a cliff and the guy  
doesn't even know who  
Superman is  
and doesn't even ever  
hear of Wonder Woman's silver wrists  
so the bullets  
just pretend  
hit him in the head  
and he cries  
and all sorts of people  
like milkmen and garbage men scream  
but then the moon comes out  
over the cliff  
which is really  
just tall buildings  
with their lights out  
and the blood somehow  
gets sucked back up into his head  
like a magic scarf or something  
so the man goes home to his dog  
barking all over the windows  
and finds a glass of water  
and two aspirin  
for a headache  
that isn't even real anyway  
OK?



RAINBURN

For Melissa

Something about the resurrection  
Of the body

A way of planting flowers  
In a downpour  
From a tropical depression  
Lingering off the coast  
With a Russian name

The great weight of our trade agreements  
Not listening to the talk  
Of the mind  
But placing hands into green soil

And she said she gave up  
On her drive of immortality  
Early in life  
That she was undecided about the soul  
And then a comment  
About Aristotle as a plant...  
A flowering plant

Meanwhile while sorting  
Fragments of joy  
Into a meaningful paradox  
We renewed our commitment  
To stomp through puddles

How easy it was to tan  
In the charming cascade

164. boys. Euphemism for testicles.

165. Accord. Loaded. V6. Moon-roof. CD player.  
Leather seats. Air.

166. elementary education. See Flow chart-movie  
script.

HOW I BECAME AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

Walk into the Pine Lounge  
See her with friends at a booth  
Drink beer  
Say stuff like: "Your big toe reminds me of JFK."  
Take her up on bike ride in the morning  
Yellow flowers and love  
Try to live together  
No  
Marry in four months  
Quit night orderly job at Binghamton General  
Hospital  
Decide to become an Audiologist  
Why  
Get New York State Higher Education Loan  
Move to Geneseo, NY  
Start audiologist classes as SUC at Geneseo  
(January semester)  
Hear stuff like:  
The world is made of atoms

Adams?  
Last Three Days  
Quit  
Start driving her to meatpacking plant  
Accounts-payable clerk  
Return home (Conesus Lake)  
Read Russian Novels  
Try Carpentry (Fail)  
Met Joe Fountaine  
Decide on MA in English  
Figure way to start late and use loan dough for  
Audiology  
Go to class  
Wrong class (Accounting – precursor)  
Quit  
Go home  
More Russian Novels  
Convince wife to quit job  
“Let’s live it up and enjoy the summer.”  
How?  
“Sell our car and cover the rent for a few  
months.”  
Done.  
Two weeks later she says she’s pregnant.  
Start hitchin’ to the obstetrician  
Take out loan for another car  
Try to retrieve loan money from college  
Told: No way!  
Become a real pain in the ass  
Protest outside loan office door with pregnant  
wife  
Start working as a night orderly again

During the day say stuff like “Hey, you’re  
building a pool in your back yard with the  
New York State Higher Education money you  
rip off from needy students” to loan officer  
Get money back  
Get sick of orderly job  
Quit  
End up on welfare  
Be told by welfare officer that you’re an  
immature jerk  
“Oh, really?”  
Told to grow up fast  
Become an elementary school teacher  
A struggle to get back into Geneseo  
Finally Dean relents  
Work hard  
Complications at birth – baby stillborn  
Take incompletes  
Return to Binghamton sad and depressed  
Pop yellow jackets when father-in-law gets on  
case  
Watch her wild brother and sisters  
Frank Zappa always on  
*... Watch out where those huskies go*  
*Don’t you eat that yellow snow*  
Return to Geneseo  
Finish incompletes  
Start working as a night porter at Holiday Inn  
Run for drinks for lousy house band  
On the knees to vacuum popcorn  
And other party shit on the floors after the bar  
closes

Take as many days off as possible  
Tell manager various relatives have died  
Wait for student teaching assignment  
Be told by Student Teacher Coordinator:  
“I’ll never place you in any public school in New  
York State.”  
Jump over desk and pull asshole coordinator by  
his tie to the floor  
Be led off campus by security guards  
Rescued by the Dean of Placement  
Sees potential  
Says: “He’s one of the top three candidates I’ve  
seen  
In the last ten years.”  
Compromise  
Assigned to Campus school  
Assigned to a tough old teacher  
Observation class in the room  
They can watch me  
Grade two  
Show up on the first day in wedding suit and  
two-tone shoes  
Head kid in line asks about the white pimple in  
the corner of my nose  
Says with some volume: “Hey, Mister, what’s  
that?”  
Cool  
Teacher takes a liking to wife and me  
Invites us to dinner at her house  
Gives me a B plus after a nine week stint  
Says: “You drop the *g* off *ing* words a little too  
often to receive an A.”

Start applying for teaching jobs  
Wife pregnant again  
Land one in Avon, New York  
Thought from my resume I was a hippy  
Brought me in for laughs  
Practice taught in front of fourth grade teachers  
Had to do a William Jennings Bryant choral  
poem  
With one fourth grade class  
I’m dying  
Then see one tiny foot keeping time with the  
beat  
Crawl on my knees down the aisle  
Put my head on the kid’s foot  
With dumbfounded amazement claim:  
“Old William is trapped in this here foot.  
Let’s yell and scream this poem  
To get him out.”  
Works  
Teacher scowls at me as I leave the room  
Get the job anyway  
Get my own fourth grade class  
First day of school:  
“Good morning kids, I’m Mr. Martin.  
Now push your desks out of rows  
And let’s have some fun.”

167. **speidi.** Famous food found only in Binghamton, New York. Marinated lamb, pork or chicken cooked over open flame on skewer and placed in a piece of Italian bread. I took Bernstein to Poncho’s Pit but prefer Lupo’s Char-pit.

**168. rejected.** I made a claim in my letter to W.W. Norton (See Appendix A) that BOINK, in addition to using personal narratives, poetry, found textual items, standup comedy, and nom de plumes to reveal my life, would also include rejection slips that I've received while on my literary odyssey. I've decided against using them. I did get a positive one from Mr. Kornblum. However, not all publishers find a kind pen in hand when rejecting a writer. My favorite slip of all time came from *Unspeakable Visions of the Individual*. The rejection slip was a photo of WC Fields with tophat and cane. Beneath him: *You've just been rejected by Unspeakable Visions of the Individual*. Funny and harsh.

**169. Joe Fontaine.** Great friend and companion during my years in Geneseo. A jack of all trades. I became part of his crew. *I'll try anything once* was Joe's motto. The first job I ever went out on with him entailed taking out the nails in the old boards he tore off an old barn. After about two boards, he hopped off the ladder and declared a cigarette break. Joe smoked *Mores*. As he puffed, he looked at the barn and after a second weed told me to hop in the truck. "Let the fucking wind have this thing," he said. He broke in a high-whining-hee-hee laugh. We drove to a diner and drank multiple cups of coffee while playing pinball. He told me before we started playing that he was an ex-Green beret and knew how to kill an opponent instantly

via pressure points. This was my fate if I beat him. Later in the season he hired a black belt in karate who was on his way to Harvard Business School in the fall to watch and manage the crew. Joe needed to drum up business around the lake and couldn't always keep an eye on us. The karate guy's name was Big Al. Joe would always say: "Use it on them, Big Al, if they don't work hard enough." Big Al never did. But he would smoke a joint with us.

**170. precursor.** Eileen is an accountant.

## APPENDIX T

### CANVAS

My mother's name is Canvas

she raises peacocks

and calls the moon

by a green name

I love the black streaks in her skin

her pink eyes when she finds the sun

in a blue container

Her voice is the sea

when envelopes of morning

arrive

Slap  
more paint  
on the heart

Stroll  
hemlock  
&  
dogwood  
paths

A blue jay  
sips  
from a track  
in the mud

Sunlight  
adores  
the pine needles  
in a horse's dung

It's  
the concept  
of men  
& women  
on gray rocks

Fire lizards  
when you  
pick up  
the new brush

It's OBSCENE to imitate crows  
and  
bang pots at 3:00 A. M.  
There's no whiskey  
to quiet my father  
His name is Canvas  
He never listens  
Forbids the path of feet across his body  
I want to paint trees on his tongue  
Slash his words with shrill beaks  
retrieve my image  
and  
fly off

Leap over verbs and place  
a canvas  
in the center  
of a song meadow  
Increase the static until the news  
is a waterfall  
of white noise  
Cross the rainbow  
Refuse to make up what it's like  
when voices drift  
from cliffs  
and fade

The technology of the face

EXPLODES

Endless  
brown  
eyes  
roll  
from  
caves

White bread makes an appearance

There  
is  
a  
speech  
in  
a  
nose  
the  
size  
of  
a  
sausage

Teeth  
excavate

& tongue  
the politics

of  
hunger

Everywhere a commercial  
lurks

Stretch the Canvas  
over  
an  
edge

NOT THERE

Laughter floods the terror

of

RECOGNITION





My name is Canvas  
I need a drink

My mother raises peacocks  
I need a drink

My father has a yellow palm on the tip of his  
tongue

I NEED A DRINK

The sea is lost and happy  
I need a drink

There is no death  
I need a drink

My brush is full of stars  
I need a drink

It doesn't matter where you are  
there's no reason  
to connect

(shuttle back and forth  
to a center)

blank page    snow    don't panic

There are many names for Canvas

And no confession

to crawl  
into  
for  
wandering  
in & out  
of lines

Entertain what approaches

eyeball of hypotenuse

philosophers  
flying from graves

this collage of innocence  
and orchards

PENCILS USED AND CHEWED

bottles smashed in alleyways

PEANUT SHELLS UNDER STADIUM SEATS

napkins and wrappers      swirling up and out

OF CAR WINDOWS

parts of text      rhododendron      pills

CRAYONS FOR A CHILD'S CANVAS

orchid      burnt sienna      lavender      maize

THE LOST HORIZON

highways      nationstates      inside/out

PARTICULARS UNIVERSALS

cadmium ochre umber

DREAMS

## APPENDIX U

### PEPPERONI

One day (around 4:30 in the afternoon) a man started jumping up and down in his kitchen. As he jumped up and down, he spun around and around. As he spun around and around, he said:

Pepperoni Pepperoni Pepperoni Pepperoni  
Pepperoni Pepperoni Pep-pe-RONI!

The man liked to jump up and down. He liked to spin around and around. He liked to be in the kitchen, too. So many good things to cook and eat. Pepperoni Pepperoni Pepperoni Pepperoni  
Pepperoni Pepperoni Pep-pe-RONI!

On his big white stove was a large pot of simmering tomato sauce. On the counter were two large lumps of dough, a purple onion the size of a baseball, a magic mound of delicious mushrooms, and a chunk of mozzarella cheese.

Man, that sauce smelled great!  
Pepperoni Pepperoni Pepperoni Pepperoni  
Pepperoni Pepperoni Pep-pe-Roni!

Now with all this commotion in the kitchen, what were his children in the living room up to? Were they watching TV? Were they having a pillow fight? Were they painting monster murals on the walls?

No!

His daughter (around four years old) had just finished building the Leaning Tower of Pisa, the Eiffel Tower, the Empire State Building, the Brooklyn Bridge, and the Great Wall of China with all sorts of red, yellow and green blocks. She had blue eyes and lots of curly, golden brown hair.

His son (almost one-year-old) had just nibbled the corner off a book called WONDERS OF THE WORLD. He had eyes as brown as chestnuts and a railroad cap on his head.

There was a fair amount of drool between the pages of the book when his sister pointed to the words:

Pepperoni Pepperoni Pepperoni Pepperoni  
Pepperoni Pepperoni Pep-pe-RONI!  
swirling around her head like a gentle breeze.

“Let’s see what Daddy is up to,” she said. Then she kicked over the Eiffel Tower and the Empire State Building. She laughed when her little brother crawled right through the Great Wall of China and onto the Brooklyn Bridge.

“One, two, three,” she said, before punting the Leaning Tower of Pisa in all directions. There’s always something new to build.

When the girl entered the kitchen and saw what her father was doing, she clapped her hands,

jumped up and down, spun around and around and said:

Pepperoni Pepperoni Pepperoni Pepperoni  
Pepperoni Pepperoni Pep-pe-Roni!

When the little boy crawled into the kitchen and saw what his father and sister were doing, he pulled himself up by a chair, jumped away from it, landed on his bottom, drooled on his knees, clapped his hands and said:

Roni Roni Roni!

“Great!” their dad said. “Pepperoni lovers!” And they all said as loud as they could:

PEPPERONI PEPPERONI PEPPERONI  
PEPPERONI PEPPERONI PEPPERONI  
PEP-PE-RONI!

And when they did that, the words flew right out the kitchen window and started to chase after kids riding their bikes, swinging on swings, and skipping to the park. They went high into the trees and whistled right through the birds and of course stayed right in the heads of all the dogs and cats.

A great barking, meowing, chirping, and shouting: “Oh, boy!” in the neighborhood began. Soon all kinds of cats, birds, dogs, and kids showed up at the man’s house. Everyone was invited in and the house filled up and up and up.

The cats really loved to jump up and down on the

kitchen table and on top of the kitchen cabinets and piano in the living room.

The birds (pigeons, robins, sparrows, a crow, a blue jay, a cardinal, and a hummingbird) were happy to be spinning around and around on the windowsills in every room of the house.

Dogs and kids were anywhere and everywhere. Jumping up and down, spinning ‘round and ‘round, barking and shouting:

PEPPERONI PEPPERONI PEPPERONI  
PEPPERONI PEPPERONI PEPPERONI  
PEP-PE-RONI!

Now all this jumping, spinning, and shouting got into the bones and bloodstream of the house and caused it to bounce up and down on its foundation. And the noise inside the house grew louder and louder: Like a hundred jet planes taking off. Like a herd of elephants playing saxophones. Like big bad booming thunder.

When the man’s neighbors looked at the bouncing house, they muttered:

“There’s always something going on over there!”

Then (around 5:15 P. M.) the man stopped jumping up and down, stopped spinning around and around, stopped saying pepperoni...just like that.

He looked at his daughter and son. He looked at

all the kids, all the dogs, all the cats, and all the birds and said: "That was one WILD PEPPERONI DANCE! But I don't have any pepperoni and need it for the pizzas.

So the man swooped up his children into his arms, dashed to his car, buckled his little boy in his car seat and his little girl in a seat belt, and drove off to the supermarket. When they got there, the man put his little boy and girl in a shopping cart and whizzed off to the deli section.

No juggling grapefruits, tomatoes, and potatoes - the man liked to do that.

No pressing lips on the glass doors of the ice cream section - the little girl liked to do that.

No throwing boxes of Kleenex and bags of potato chips out of the cart and onto to the floor - the little boy liked to do that.

Not this time!

"Pepperoni Pepperoni Pepperoni Pepperoni Pepperoni Pepperoni Pep-Pe-Roni!" the man and girl said.

"Roni, Roni, Roni!" the little boy said.

The deli was busy. The man took a number from the red number dispenser and got in line. In front of him there were two pounds of macaroni salad with orange sneakers on, a 1/2 pound of smoked turkey wearing a blue hat with a feather, one pound of Swiss cheese looking this way and that, and a

bucket of chicken wings wearing sunglasses.

The man laughed and sang to his children:  
Pepperoni Pepperoni Pepperoni Pepperoni  
Pepperoni Pepperoni Pep-pe-roni!

When his number was finally called (58 by the way), he stepped up to the counter and said: "Two sticks of your best pepperoni, please."

The woman behind the counter broke into a big smile and said: "Did I hear you say:  
Pepperoni Pepperoni Pepperoni Pepperoni  
Pepperoni Pepperoni Pep-pe-RONI!"

The little girl and little boy screamed: "MOMMY!" And the man lifted them up and out of the cart and over the counter to be kissed by their happy mother.

Everybody was having a good time, except for maybe the 5 pounds of hot dogs in dungarees with a hole in one of the knees, the 2 1/2 pounds of potato salad whistling and rolling her eyes, and the 1 pound of tuna fish repeating over and over to himself: "I'll never get out of here."

When the woman handed the man the two sticks of her best pepperoni, she said: "I'm almost done here. What time will the pizzas come out of the oven?"

The man looked at his daughter, then at his son,

and back at his wife. He scratched his head; he rolled his eyes. He started to jump up and down and spin 'round and 'round. "You mean the ones I'll cover with delicious Pepperoni Pepperoni Pepperoni, Pepperoni, Pepperoni Pepperoni Pepperoni!" he said.

"Yes," the girl and boy said.

"Yes," the woman said.

"Yes," the hot dogs, potato salad, and tuna fish said.

"As soon as Mommy gets home," he said, laughing.

"But don't forget, we have lots of company!"

## DAY SIXTEEN

(March 13, 1999)

I was dropped on my head when I was six months old.

## DAY SEVENTEEN

I'm always pretty chapped at this time of year and I'm feeling especially dry today. I need some lotion on my back and thighs. I come from a long line of dry people. My mother was dry. So were my aunt and grandmother. I should drink more water. Get off the coffee and coke. Make some **resolutions** and stick to them. But I'm a little tired after all this writing and a great party.

Until yesterday, the point of the memoir had been to wait for the line that should have started it in the first place. Ever since I've read *Waiting for Godot* by Sam Beckett, I've felt waiting is an art and a cosmic pastime. Of course, it's an art I've never mastered. And it's difficult to say what we're waiting for. Many writers have taken a stab at that and have come up with all kinds of things. I won't venture into this area. But I think I have put on a good wait for the first 16 days of the memoir and now relish the chance to continue my capricious **journey** without the burden of an ass-kicking line consigned to a trumped-up place by a formal design and the fate of calendar days.

Of course, I'm not an idiot and have known all along that no one had to wait until yesterday to read the line that should have started this memoir. I'm sure there will be and/or are a few skeptics out there harping about the idiocy factor. In fact, some might maintain that the blow to my head early in life confirms the possibility that the design of my memoir in the first place is the result of a soft head

meeting linoleum during a crucial formation period. It seems reasonable to me, though completely wrong. More to the point was my need to discover what I had to say about my life once I set some frivolous parameters and had rejected the tell-all account of my existence. So I worried (a little bit) about those readers who after reading Day One would flip ahead to Day Sixteen to enjoy the line that should have started the memoir. I had some options in my brain to frustrate the *page-flippers* and discussed one in particular with my wife.

"Look, Honey," I said. "I could bury the line appearing on Day Sixteen in one of the more lengthy notes and then offer a cash prize to the person who could find it." This intrigued me on a number of counts. First, I like a good game and what better game is there than the game of text? My wife advised against the turning of Day Sixteen into an Easter egg hunt. She had read a couple of the Days, found them annoying to begin with, and couldn't see the point of making the "thing" any more frustrating than it already was. When I protested and said life is frustrating, she just put up her hands and said *it's a good line; let your readers read it when they fucking please*. Eileen is usually not predisposed to strong language, so I thought I was on to something.

Second, I am a man of cash awards and often hand out small bags of cash to friends and strangers. Over the years, I have given out small bags of cash for health insurance, musical



equipment, and booze. I'm not sure how this philanthropic gene made it into my gene pool. Perhaps, it didn't. However, during my early TV-guzzling years, I was taken by a show called *The Millionaire*. If partial and inaccurate memory serves my clichés accurately, I think a guy, by the name of Mr. Anthony, handed out million dollar checks to random people. It was sort of like receiving a MacArthur fellowship without having any talent for anything. Any schmuck could receive a million from Mr. Anthony, a fastidious guy in a basic black suit. Mr. Anthony was simply in the employment of some anonymous donor who got his kicks from laying a lot of dough on some poor bastards. The rest of the show was dedicated to the proposition that money corrupts and turns everyone into fools and against each other. Gee, it sounds a little like the doggy-eating world I live in today. But I was only a kid back then zoning in on the cathode-tube rays, not a capitalistic pawn in the only game in town.

Still I'm enthralled with the process of writing checks to ordinary folks that could use a couple of extra bucks. Eileen calls me Donald, not Mr. Anthony – after Donald Trump. But this is not a fair characterization of my philanthropist impulse on her part. Sure, Trump has a lot of dough, but does he give it away? No way! On the other hand, I don't have that much dough and enjoy giving it away. But should I this time? Throughout the memoir, I've been committed to reader participation, so why shouldn't I have some reader

pick up some bucks for a little extra effort. If folks were willing to write a Dadaist poem (Day Three – don't tell me you didn't do it) and dress like morons as suggested in my story *Operant Conditioning* (Appendix G), maybe they would be up for an Easter egg hunt?

I was pretty torn up over this decision. So, after pondering the dilemma for a day or so, I decided to forgo the millionaire trip and embrace Eileen's wisdom. **Show me the money/it's not about the money** readers need not apply. A reader (especially my readers) has the right to read any text (especially a text of mine) any way they want and in any manner they decide. I'm on your side. This is not **your father's Easter egg**.

It's hard to dabble in the superfluous without beginning to sound like an asshole. That's how I'm feeling now and for the first time find myself going against one of the Days in my life. Seventeen is starting to bug me. I'm ready to accuse myself of trying to explain the ridiculous, and I'm reluctant to say that I didn't even compose the line that should have started the memoir (in the first place) on the day I turned fifty. It blows my mind in a way because the line had been sitting around in my head for years, and when I had the chance to finally use it with a certain amount of coordination and class, I let a host of things get to me and jotted it down on paper during the final few moments of my forty-ninth year. After all the hype and hubbub, this is an embarrassment to me. A set back – like the time I worked in a Cold Storage factory

and showed up for my first day of work in summer clothes. After a few minutes in a box car plugged into 30 degrees below zero, I turned into a blue Popsicle. The real men in real winter uniforms working alongside of me in the box car carried me out of there with a carton of French fries frozen in my hands. Once the foreman broke through the ice of my mistake, he looked at me and said: "What an idiot!" Then fired me on the spot.

If you've got an ounce of compassion in you, please take a moment to hum a few bars of David Bowie's *Under Pressure* for me, because that tune reflects what I was under. The fifty-day writing thing was becoming an incredible burden. I had never done anything like this before and was beginning to feel an affinity for Cal Ripkin or any iron soul out to set a record. But with my work in the schools and the preparation for the party, I cracked and my consecutive day design went down the tubes.

I wrote nada on my fiftieth birthday. However, the day did begin at 5:30 A.M. with the urge to read some depressing (tough) poems by **Charles Bukowski**. His *The Last Night of the Earth Poems* was one of the books on the night table next to my bed, so I grabbed it and started reading. I read the poems out loud and with considerable energy. This woke up my wife, and playing the good sport, she was willing to listen to them. I felt heavy – like there was an enormous bird perched (Dodo?) in a heavy nest on top of my head. **Buk's** read on human sadness in the world really resonates with a

big bird sitting on your head.

Without a doubt, dark periods and thoughts are a part of most lives, and mine is no exception. The psyche is conflicted (constructed) and we all face moments and experiences that test the hell out of us. I hung out in this mood and realization until I felt the urge for a cup of coffee. Coffee has always been the starting point for me no matter what the state of mind. Coffee is instructive. It tells me to work today or to party today. It says get going. Enter the day. See what happens. Your mind is an illusion. Coffee is a loquacious bean.

After my first cup, I threw *Buk* back on the night table but resisted the notion to pick up a pen and to give a literal run on the page about what was gnawing at me. Christ, I knew my goal was to write an anti-memoir and that chunk-o-novel, poems, short fiction, and endless notes would have to carry the load of what I was willing to say and willing not to say about the first fifty years of my life. Besides, family guests were already in the house and it wouldn't be long before they woke up. Miss and Joe were here, and so were my brother and his wife. There was no time to sing the blues on the page.

By the time my family did get up, I was into a full caffeine buzz and ready to face the new demands of turning fifty years old. I was going to be a father again just around the time AARP, Centrum Silver, and Social Security (the feds gave me my life earnings from 1965 to the present to consider before applying for Prozac) tagged me

with the inevitability of growing older. I was entering the first stage of old fart. I had been a farter for years but this was different. This was Old Fart. At least **Premature Old Fart**. Certainly, it was a time to stand by my gut and lack of hair with some insouciant dignity and attitude.

When the gray sky turned blue, the countdown to the big bash began. Unexpectedly, the temperature started to rise and by the time the guests arrived, it was a sunny 45 degrees. Not bad for March 13<sup>th</sup> in Boston. With a new fedora on my head and caterers keeping my champagne glass filled, I opened up to the light and love around me. It was time to party.

I once won a jar of barbecue sauce for being the best dancer in a country and western bar, and I had hot sauce on my feet for my entire party. I've perfected a *maniac free style* type of dancing over the years and spun into the day by dancing with every woman at the party during a 12 minute/17second encounter with *You Can Leave Your Hat On* (which I did – the new fedora from my brother and Nancy) by Merl Saunders and his funky friends that kicked off festivities. *We's got hot and sweaty*. And my new Bose Acoutimas - 6 sound system kept the tunes on *cranked* for the entire party, which defined the activities in the living room. When anyone tired of rocking, they retired to the **storytelling** room and told stories and enjoyed the floating conversation that wafted between the tales and remembrances. Super kid, Matt Kidd, shot a video of the party that's now

worth \$2000 on the **black market**. His father, **Peter**, told me the best last chance answer is love and in reference to caring for an infant at 50, I coined: "No more lookin' at who's doing it, you're doing it." Eileen flipped over that one.

The **gifts** were fabulous.

## NOTES

171. resolutions. I never make any.

172. journey. See Appendix V.

173. Honey. Remember her?

174. your father's Easter egg. Phrasing from a car commercial: This is not your father's car. As in geezer, pitiful old man, etc.

175. show me the money/it's not about the money. Popular form of athlete-speak.

176. Bukowski. See poem.

### HANK AND ME

-for Charles Bukowski

Hank doesn't like  
moon  
star  
or infinity  
in his poems

I'm not sure  
about  
crapper  
vomit  
and whore  
in mine

Hank was beaten  
had acne  
and learned to see  
through people

I took a few blows  
to the head  
feared girls  
and sat on my mother's couch  
giving the fireman  
next door the finger

Hank knew how to fight  
Not me  
We both despise the literary establishment  
Don't care for war

Hank wins at the track  
had lots of problems  
with women  
and eventually mellowed

I watch sports  
on TV  
been called a shithead  
a few times  
and think about my diet

Hank's famous

Born the same year as my dad:

a navy man  
boozer  
popped a fag in the mouth  
outside a movie theatre in Philadelphia  
in 1945

kept a butcher knife  
and bottle of Seagrams  
handy for any trouble  
that broke out  
in his bar

I'm not much on violence  
feel scared  
most of the time  
capable of finding the female  
inside of me

Sometimes I wish I could talk to Hank  
I've had the beat jobs  
think about death  
like the way he views it

Not possible  
if it was  
I bet he'd rather talk  
to my old man  
if he was still around

(*Colorado North Review*, 33/1&2)

177. **good sport.** Martins traditionally celebrate

their birthdays for a month. Being a good sport is an available asset for those involved in the celebrations.

178. **storytelling.** Eileen converted our bedroom into a storytelling room by trucking our queen size bed to the cellar. I thought it was a big waste of time, but it turned out that many people preferred that room over the living room and the loud music.

179. **black market.** On 11/21/98, Peter Kidd and I recorded a spontaneous poetry reading at the Chelsea Savoy Hotel in NYC. We were on a weekend vacation that was to include a meeting with **Bob Holman** in order for me to garner some tips from Bob on how to distribute *Modulations* in NYC. My brother and his wife, Nancy, stopped by and were part of the festivities. Once we listened to the tape we realized it would be worth money some day as a collector's item. We set the price at \$1500 dollars. Since then it has risen to over \$4000. The video of my party extends the notion to video. We did manage to see Bob at his apartment in Tribeca. He was gracious and friendly, but I was too out of it from wine and smoke to fully appreciate his suggestions. We ended up in a bar in his neighborhood trying to catch quarters balanced on our elbows. Many people in the bar seemed to enjoy doing this. I gave Bob the following poem as a souvenir of my visit. It appeared in *Feel Swap Fifty: The 'los hormigas' issue*.

## HILARITY OF DISTRIBUTION

All pronouns feign excuses to witness  
( ) absence in ( ) piece. Carlos  
understands. Once a pine was all  
aglow but the story ended. Enter  
the cathedral of maidens  
on the buoyant charms of the rich.  
After a trinity of relationships  
and brilliant critical exegesis  
(i.e., the folklore of language is cunning and  
sparse)  
confusion reigned and a lone horseman  
raced into the next town  
without ( ) mailbox of clowns.

Say exhilaration and night weave  
a dream through Rosemary's head.  
Rules are rules:  
the refrigerator hums and a mouse  
whips pass the man with a bundle  
of correspondence in ( ) arms.  
Letter A claims to understand more  
about Mayan excavations than the next guy.  
Letter B contains a sonnet. If written  
by a twelve year old boy, Rosemary  
will shift in ( ) sleep as ( ) book tour  
begins in the heart of the sun.

Margins appear to challenge  
the couple responsible  
for the catalogue of summer dresses.

Soft breezes attend the sullen model  
walking down the pearl runway without shoes.  
Without a calendar or a fixed star  
to guide the magnificent hi-jinx of sailors  
( ) grimaces  
thinking of the price of admission  
to watch ( ) traipse down a loading dock  
where back orders of stylish shoes  
ponder ( ) final dilemma.

**180. Peter.** Peter Kidd - Poet, Landscape Artist, Publisher of **Igneus** Press. Great Friend. Father of Matt Kidd. College Student. Great Friend...too. **Video Artist.**

**181. Bob Holman.** Poet and friend. Author of *the collect call of the wild*. He wrote a fantastic blurb for the back cover of *Modulations*. Holman's mission is to set poetry free. In his words: "The universal remote control is being passed into your hands. Poetry is the Language of the Future."

**182. Igneus.** Variant form of igneous. Fire. Today is August 11, 1999. I've spent a total of 37 days working on my memoir. Most of the memoir work, at this point, entails finishing up these notes. Just got back from a vacation in the Adirondacks with E. Wrote some poems while on vacation. Rocks and geology have been entering some recent poems due to my reading *A Short History of Planet Earth: Mountains, Mammals, Fire, and Ice*. My son gave me the book on my fiftieth birthday. Leo the Lion

is the August sign – sun sign. My brother is a Leo.  
See poem.

### LULLABY

The lioness stitches her nose to the air  
and disappears into the page.  
This is not a cage.  
There will be no lapsing into unconsciousness  
even with the password.  
Marlin Perkins is a leap  
and lived next door to us when I was a kid.  
This explains my parrot shirts  
and the reason for Hawaiian scenes  
on my undershorts.  
Krakatoa is not the password.  
No hula-hoops won't work either.  
"The day is ripe for pink bellies" qualifies  
as a sentence not a word.

D

I

A

G

R

A

M

it or mention the following rock categories:  
Igneous, Metamorphic, SEDIMENTARY  
the next time someone asks for directions.  
We live sedimentary lives.  
Close to metamorphosis they forfeited  
the crickets in their pockets to the aging cop.

Beat. Take a walk. Igneous. Ignatius.  
Hot damn less the Jesuits gets us nowhere.  
In the form of a question we are.  
Jeopardy or Double Jeopardy is not the answer.  
The party continues:  
low roars and plenty of beer  
even though you're brilliant and ready to sleep.  
"Title" is close.

**183. Sun.** Fact: 99% of the available matter in our  
Solar System is part of the sun. See poem.

### SEE POETICS

for Jessica

Cumuluous clouds above a mountain lake.  
A bell that rings  
to tell everyone it's five o'clock.  
You know the drill.  
You can afford to be kind.

Wind ripples the lake.  
It's been a long time since you've seen  
a blue heron follow your flight  
down a country road.  
The mind presents its ideas.

There is an inside/out to experience.  
From there we grow  
into the unknown encoding us  
like letter-sounds for sky.

And what about the Imagination?

We're facile as a smile  
with the numbers composing it.  
Tick-tock go the known quadrants.  
Look at the poem through any telescope.  
It grows and hesitates –

Metaphor for universe on a microscopic scale,  
spews basic elements in the real one,  
as in collapse into projection of what could be.  
Single image: the sun is big (magnificent  
in strength and concern) and we're debris. Shine.

**184. metamorphoses.** See Appendix W for short fiction story: “Charlie O’Reiley, Prophet.”

**185. form of a question:** “Why is there something rather than nothing?” (Heidegger)

**186.** See List.

## GIFTS FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS

*Puerto Fino Fedora, JJ Hat Center, New York, NY.*

*More Than A Champion: The Style Of Muhammad Ali, Jan Philipp Reemtsma.*

*A Short History Of Planet Earth: Mountains, Mammals, Fire, and Ice, J.D. MacDougall.*

*The Essential Etheridge Knight, Etheridge Knight.*

*Wild Dreams of a New Beginning, Lawrence Ferlinghetti.*

*Tales of Make-Believe, Edited by R.L. Green.*

*Anthology of Irish Verse, Padraic Colum.*

*The Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations Millennium General Assembly, Denis Johnson.*

*Angela's Ashes, Frank McCourt.*

*Life of a Poet, Rainer Maria Rilke, Ralph Freedman.*

*The Irish Isle: New Irish Cuisine/Traditional Irish Music, Sharon O'Connor.*

*Traditional Dirges (CD) For The Celtic Harp & Fiddle, The Boys Of the Isle.*

One box of Penis Pasta with recipes.

T-shirt with words on front: DICKIE-DO  
AWARD: MY TUMMY STICKS OUT  
FURTHER THAN MY DICKIE-DO.

Besheer Art Tile, Bedford New Hampshire.  
\$50. Gift Certificate - Barnes & Noble.



Kenneth Cole Watch with inscription: Happy 50th  
Love Melissa

1 bottle of Cuvve Dom Perignon.

Back Pleaser Ultra: 5 motor “wave action” seat  
massager.

Pledge Award: If older is better than I’m  
approaching magnificent.

## APPENDIX V

23

1

I don’t think you die  
Into a story  
But into the ground.

2

The ground has a history  
And looks good  
With lots of flowers.

3

The ground’s been around.  
It orbits the sun.  
About a million of these grounds  
Would fit into the sun.

4

Most call it Earth.  
Some call it Gaia.

5

The sun is hot  
And runs a nuclear fusion plant  
A lot more efficiently than we run  
Our nuclear fission plants.

6

It's great to bask in the sun  
On days at the beach  
Or even in winter on special days  
When a warm current of air  
Figures everyone into shorts  
And tank tops.

7

Tank tops are nice  
Because of the beauty.  
The beauty of curves.

8

In L. Bloom's head last night  
Some time after he crossed the Liffey  
And ordered a burgundy and a cheese sandwich  
At Davy Byrne's pub  
This thought about beauty being related  
To curves  
Popped into his consciousness.

9

I read Homer's Odyssey  
In high school.  
On February 2, 1982, I wandered into a bookstore  
And bought a copy of Ulysses.

10

Joyce was born on February 2, 1882.  
(coincidence?)

11

According to Theosophical doctrine  
There are seven planes of consciousness:  
Atomic, mineral or molecular, vegetable or  
cellular,  
Animal or organic, human, universal, divine.

12

Rosy-fingered dawn.

13

So light discloses.  
And the light from the sun  
Or rather the sun itself as light  
Will grow large enough one day  
(As it begins to run out of fuel)  
To consume the ground  
We're living on and in.

14

There's probably a good chance  
We will have escaped  
Into some virtual pocket of space  
By then.

15

I saw an example of this on an episode  
Of Star Trek.  
It was the one where an entire population  
Or race of people had been reduced to a half-  
dozen  
Illuminated spheres resting on marble pillars.

16

Not to mention holodecks  
Or the internet.

17

On occasion the illuminated spheres  
Bounced across a courtyard  
And came to rest on empty pillars.

18

I think for exercise.

19

But what about the soul?

20

Will the soul escape the sun  
And virtual reality  
And link up with the cosmic soul?

21

I'm not sure what I mean  
By the term cosmic soul.

22

Oneness comes to mind -  
The kind that appears  
Already here  
When you look into the night sky.

23

Home at last.

## CHARLES O' REILEY, PROPHET

With sad eyes the prophet looked at what he had written.

**BRING BACK PSYCHEDELIC MUSIC**

Or how about the one in gorgeous red and white letters:

**I SEE YOU**

At ten o'clock the phone chirped. His mother.

"Charles, is that you?"

"Interruptions. FUCKING INTERRUPTIONS!"

"I called work, Charles. Are you sick?"

"Motherfucking goddamn INTERRUPTIONS!"

"That's no way..."

The prophet hung up the bird. On went the teakettle. REJOICE BRETHERN, readjoyce. Sam, the black cat, jumped onto his lap.

Nobody was listening and so he said. "Last night I went to bed early. I went to bed early, didn't I?"

The prophet closed his eyes. How he can see the next fire in the next shoe store in the next town beats the hell out of everyone. Philosophers crawl on their bellies to kiss his feet. Get to know the flames, Spinoso, baby.

At eleven o'clock Charlie's mom called his sister.

"Sally, he didn't go to work again."

"What did he tell you this time, Mother?"

"FUCKING INTERRUPTIONS!"

"Mom, the baby is crying. I've gotta run."

Nobody was listening and so he said. "Fools on the telephone. I hear fools on the telephone, don't

I?"

The prophet opened his eyes. Someone had entered the room via a small hole in a head not yet identified by the police. The guy was short and carried his brain inside a Hellmann's mayonnaise jar. His face resembled a volcano project assigned to a third-grade class. Miniature sea gulls flew around his eyes.

"Don't get the wrong idea, Charlie, me boy. I am not, repeat, not your hero. I just stopped by for a cup of tea, if you don't mind."

The prophet was afraid. Nevertheless, he walked over to the man and plunged his hand into the jar.

"Hey, what the hell do you think you're doing? Are you nutso, Charlie? Bonkers, man!"

Now something right out of a Franz Kafka story or like in the movie *The Fly* – the part where the atomic scientist exchanges molecules with a dung lover – the prophet's hand changed into a giant crab claw. And the brain started to wiggle like a common fish.

The exact moment of metamorphosis is tough to predict.

At 11:30, O'Reiley's boss called.

"Look, O'Reiley, get your seer-sucking ass in here and prepare the cold cuts or you're fired!"

"But my stomach hurts," the fish said.

The prophet loosened his grip.

"I don't give a shit, O'Reiley, if your divine butt-hole hurts. Get here or you're on the streets with those fucking signs.

The prophet was worried. What if his signs

didn't make it? What if no coins fell into his hat?

What if the population was too jaded?

“Up shit creek without a paddle,” the fish said.

“That’s right me pal,” the man said. “The fish there is right.”

The prophet strengthened his grip.

At noon the phone rang.

## DAY EIGHTEEN

(Chunk-O-Novel)

*In this chunk of chunk-o-novel, the main character, Fist, is now in first grade. Fist doesn't have a great experience in first grade. Of course, he is unaware of his cosmic test (doing something really important and significant on earth to escape the wheel of birth and death). He's just a little guy caught in the freaked-out whims and fantasies of the adults around him.*

### CHRISTIAN SOLDIER ACADEMY

I was doomed. No way out. No escape. Sister Edward Marie would never believe I missed school because of chicken pox. That was too much to swallow. A yarn made of surreal thread. She'd choke and gag on it. Spit visions of fire. I could see her face smoldering like sulfur rocks. Out for three weeks because of chicken pox? Never! My itchy goose was cooked.

It took an entire week for the last pox to drop off my nose. What an ugly sucker! It grew from my snout like an amphibious toadstool. I bounced up and down on my bed to loosen it, but it swore allegiance to me like insects to each other, making love in the Garden of Paradise. Nothing could be done. It was quite a scab.

Even my mother – once she accepted poking my nose into steam from a tea kettle didn't affect the thing – began to use my sick leave to keep me in

religious shape. I worried about the difference style of exercise permitted by Mom to explain the mystery of the Holy Trinity. She tolerated confusion over the clear and discrete fact three heads were actually one. Sister Edward Marie was not so lenient or understanding. She had a grab bag of punishments for anyone who stumbled on the period in the definition of Penance. A grocery bag filled with fortune-like slips of paper with various instructions on how to feel and what to do to yourself for missing or abusing a sacred question.

Slips that read:

FEEL LIKE AN OLD MAN NEXT TO A  
BUSHEL OF ROTTEN APPLES.  
DREAM OF YOUR KNUCKLES  
WHACKED BY A STEEL RULER.  
GROW A PAIN IN YOUR STOMACH  
THE SIZE OF A GRAPEFRUIT  
SAY: I AM A BAD STUDENT A 1000  
TIMES BEFORE BED.

Sometimes, she slipped a wooden mouse trap into the bag. Her drills were intense.

I knew a three week absence due to illness would drive the old biddy into ecstatic conniptions. I wasn't stupid or unaware of the obvious connection between sickness and sin. Hell, they were blood brothers. It was common knowledge a common cold was the result of three venial sins. Some sneezed after a white lie. Chicken pox was serious

business and linked to the famous bite of the infamous apple.

Something as simple as a dream but fatal to the soul brought out the poultry blisters. Eve was not our ancient mother, but a large, awkward girl singing the lusty songs of puberty. Bingo! Scabs galore over the entire body. Sister Edward Marie was no fool. She knew all this and incorporated it in her weekly lecture series at St. Thorn Catholic College: *Sin, Scabs, and Pus in the Human Dimension*. The kind of hell she'd make me pay for my sabbatical of sores played with my sphincter.

Spinning like a top, I recited my concerns to Mom during final inspection. In our parish mothers earned plenary indulgences for neat children. I never escaped the house before a hard comb scraped my scalp, and my white shirt was shoved so far down my pants, it enclosed my underwear like a tent.

"Mom," I said. "Do you think a note is enough?"

"Of course it is, Fist," she said. "The note explains everything to Sister Edward Marie. I even mentioned what a good boy you were taking your medicine and learning by heart all the questions on Extreme Unction. Now one last brush, on with your raincoat, and off with you. Your father is in the car waiting."

"But, Mom," I said. "Sister Edward Marie doesn't believe in getting sick. She's told us that a hundred times!"

My mother's eyes popped with nervous points of light and leaped into mine like blue fish. She put

her hands on my shoulders, raised her voice, and shook me back and forth.

"That's enough, young man! Chicken pox is a common disease of childhood. Sister knows that. Where do you get these crazy ideas? Now, run along. Your father is a very busy man."

It was useless to argue and against the fourth commandment to keep an Irishman waiting in a car. Dad had a quota of insurance to sell each day in order to win Hawaiian vacations, refrigerator-freezers, and wall-to-wall carpeting. I needed a policy that paid heavenly premiums to a kid squashed between the palms of an angry nun.

Dad's impatience crawled over my skin like red ants when I hopped into the car. He leaned against the steering wheel, gripping it with enough force to turn his knuckles into tiny white skulls.

"It's about time, Fist," he said.

He glared at me – his face a pink moon rising in anger as I yanked at my raincoat that had bunched into a soft knot between the seat and my bottom. Not ready. More time. Tick tock. He ground and chewed his teeth until the muscles in his jaws quivered like thick rubber bands. He looked ready to spit out the window.

"Well, are you ready to rejoin your Christian troops?" he said. "Give your poor Mother a break now that the giant scab is in the garbage can?"

I didn't answer. I brushed a dot of his saliva from the scar left by the scab on the tip of my nose and watched cold raindrops wiggle across the windshield. It was early November; a gray sky sat

on the trees and houses like a fat woman on a sofa. Rain dripped off my yellow rain cap and down my neck and back. I shivered.

“Fist, did you hear what I just said? Do you have pox in your ears or what?”

His impatience was matched only by his stubbornness. He ran his fingers through thinning red hair and revved the engine waiting for me to respond. I shook my head like a convict denying a priest escort rights to the electric chair. I wasn't ready for anything. This soldier was about to pee his pants.

Disgusted, Dad backed out of the driveway without looking and nearly hit Mrs. Jamieson, out for a brisk walk with Sam, her German shepherd. She lived down the street with a dozen cats and the shepherd, her pride and joy. Dad hit the brakes when she rapped the butt of the car and launched into a verbal attack about his automotive skills. Sam joined in with thunderous barks and serious attempts to get at Dad by lunging at the back window with bared teeth.

“You son-of-a-bitch!” Mrs. Jamieson said. “You're going to kill somebody one day.”

Dad let them pass then swung wide into the street. He laid on the horn when Sam found a spot in our yard for a steamy pile. Mrs. Jamieson broke into a coy smile and waved to us, shielding Sam's black coat from the rain with her red umbrella while he did his duty. Dad lowered the window, cleared his throat, and sent a pinball of phlegm in the direction of the dog and master. Then he

laughed, punched my shoulder like I was his buddy, and patched out up the street. He coasted through a stop sign, looked over at me, and shook his head. He was feeling better with his 56 Chevy in drive.

“Why so bleak, Fist?” he said. “School can't be that bad.”

I had nothing to lose and decided to plead for mercy. Dad could play governor and grant me a stay of execution. There I was outside the jail, surrounded by reporters, their microphones shoved in my face, their cameras flashing.

“Sure, fellows,” I said. “Sure, I thought I was a goner. But Dad, good old Dad, stepped in and rescued me. Today, I'm a free boy!”

At the corner of Chesnut and Leroy, I reached over and tugged on his pants.

“Do I have to go back to school, Dad?”

“That's a ridiculous question, Fist. Of course you have to go back to school. Now, let go of my pants. You'll wrinkle them.”

OK, so I wasn't free. Who is? But I didn't want to ride the black ferry to the other side. Cameras caught me on my knees, looking up to heaven, crying out in pain:

“Life in prison! Please, life in prison!”

But Dad didn't know he was the governor.

“Get back in your seat this instant!” he said. “Cut the crap! You're no more a prisoner than anyone else.”

I tried for something more in his repertoire.

“Will you walk me up to my classroom, Dad?”



“Fist, you know that will make me late for the office.”

“Please, Dad!” I said. “Sister Edward Marie will kill me! She’ll change me into a rat with bloodshot eyes. You know how Mom dislikes rats!

“Settle down, young man,” he said. “I’m warning you. It’s not too late for a taste of my belt.”

Dad was the Howard Johnson of leather and I knew all about the belt’s variety of flavors. Not in the mood for a double-scoop of strap with a twist of tongue, I settled down. So what if I saw lights flickering inside the houses we drove pass. It was a prophet’s job to notice strange things.

\*

I started to swallow imaginary clams as we fishtailed into a stop at the intersection before the school. Pete, the crossing guard, ripped his hand from the hood of our car, and while shaking like a leaf, motioned to Dad to slow down. Classmates skipped across in front of us, stomping and splashing through water from a backed-up storm drain. Dad pointed to my friends.

“They look happy enough,” he said.

I paid no attention to them. My eyes were glued to the trees in front of the school. I broke into an icy sweat and pointed to them like a nervous golden retriever. Dad leaned toward me and used my spastic fingers like a rifle sight. He spotted the pigeons on the slate roof of Christian Soldier Church, which rose behind the school like a brick giant.

“A row of filthy pigeons?” he said.

Terror invaded my voice.

“The trees, Dad,” I said. “Look at the trees!”

“What about them?” he said.

He didn’t see. My parents never saw any of things I did. But there they were, classmates of mine nailed to the trees. Small plaques beneath their feet described the offense:

JOHNNY: VICTIM OF THE COMMON  
COLD

KATHY: KNOCKED FOR A LOOP BY  
STREP THROAT

BOBBY: BAD CASE OF COOTIES

I shuddered when I picked up Sister Edward Marie perched like a vulture in the branches of the tree reserved for THE CHICKEN POX VICTIM. I was a goner.

Dad turned the corner and pulled over to the curb to let me out. I didn’t budge. Sister Edward Marie had rusty spikes in her mouth.

“Out of the car!” he said.

He leaned over me, yanked the door handle, and smacked the door open with his fist. A maelstrom of sweat and icicle fear, I grabbed hold of him.

“No, Dad!” I said. “No! Please, no!”

He freed himself from my grip and sighed with disgust.

“Jesus Christ! What the hell is the matter with you?”

I was weird from the start. It took a dozen whacks on my bottom to provoke my first breath

and days to unclench my blue fists. I pointed to the trees again.

“Look,” I said. “Just look at those trees, Dad!”

“I’ve had it, Fist. Whatever you’re trying to pull, it’s not going to work. Now, out of this car, before I kick you out!” he said.

I lowered my head to my knees and grabbed the underside of the seat. I rocked back and forth, slowly at first, and then gradually increased my speed.

“No, I won’t go!” I said, over and over.

Dad came at me with terrific force.

“OK, have it your way, sonny-boy!”

We struggled. He was strong but no match for a traumatic birth.

“Loosen up, you little bastard!” he said.

The moment he tried to catch his breath, I reared up and struck my head on the dashboard. St. Christopher and other icons of the Holy Family scattered like bowling pins across it. I threw another strike to the dash and found my rhythm. I was born with a hard head.

“All right, Fist,” Dad said. “Stop it.” I’ll walk you to your classroom for Christ sakes! Just calm down.”

Dad’s idea of walking me to my class included dragging me from the car and up the steps of the school. He continued the drag motif inside the school, making his way up another set of stairs to the first grade section with me in tow. I resisted with all my strength and whispered a prayer to the patron saint of shape-shifting.

“Turn me into a donkey, dear Saint,” I said. “Help me hold my ground. Hee Haw. Hee Haw.”

Dad felt the power of the saint and increased his pressure on my hand, moving from dragging to jerking me down the hall, as my stubborn shoes released the cries of dead children trapped in the wooden floor. I would be joining that chorus soon. I was tardy.

The one-two punch of sickness and being late for school hit my jaw. My head snapped back and a cold chill ran up my spine. In front of Sister Edward Marie’s door, I gazed at my Dad like a dizzy ass.

“Act like a man,” he said, knocking on her door without mercy.

I went into a semi-convulsive state when the door opened like a vampire’s coffin. The meanest nun in convent history nodded to my father, then peered down at me. All but the portion of her face – from silver eyebrows to the tip of an arrowhead chin – was sealed from light by her black robe and headdress. With bony fingers, she tugged at the white, half-moon bib on her chest and looked back at my father. I heard wings rustle beneath her holy disguise. She was quite tall.

“Good morning, Sister,” my dad said.

“Good morning, Mr. Murphy,” she said. “And good morning to you, Raymond.”

No nicknames from the maternity ward were allowed in her class.

“Raymond had a nasty time with the chicken pox, Sister,” my father continued. “He’s a little

apprehensive about returning to school.”

I was amazed by his composure. He spared her the gory details of my behavior, and with her eyes back on me, she sized me up for the kill. She studied me, her gray eyes burning like white coals through the lenses of her wire-rimmed glasses. My penis shivered. I was a skinny kid, but knew she'd find the meat on my bones.

“Why, Raymond, you're a good student,” she said. “You shouldn't feel the least amount of worry. You'll catch up with the class in no time. No time at all.”

Her high-pitch voice scraped my ears like fingernails running down a chalkboard.

When she turned to my father to assure him things would be fine, she donned the collective expression of workers in an Immaculate Conception factory. Her eyes became gentle cats in a patch of sunlight, and when she parted thin lips and smiled, her teeth shone like bright pearls. Captivated by her mystical charms, my dad missed the frantic activity of her right hand on her rosary bead belt. The hand roamed across the beads, squeezing the pulp out of each wooden bead between thumb and index finger with nervous delight.

“See, I told you, Raymond,” my dad said, squeezing my hand. “There's nothing to fear.”

Anxious to go, he smiled and thanked the nun for her time and understanding. He gave me a quick pat on the head and left me to my Christian fate. I listened to the click of his wingtips fade

down the hallway. I received my orders from Sister Edward Marie.

“Step inside the classroom, young man,” she said.

\*

I walked into the classroom like a lunatic convinced clouds were aliens filled with pigeon droppings. My head swiveled to the left and right and bobbed up and down. I felt a touch of vertigo and had to struggle for breath by taking short rapid gulps. I was condemned. Like Jonah into the Leviathan, each step took me further into a mouth that hadn't changed since medieval monks entered the reasons for keeping hands off the private parts into flamboyant books.

I made my way to the vacant desk in the middle of row three. All the other desks in the seven rows were filled with classmates with their hands folded and eyes so blank, I knew that invitations to the Inquisition Ball had gone out and had been received.

By the time I reached my desk, I was so nervous, a small aquarium of saliva filled my mouth. Nowhere to spit, trapped between swallowing and tight breathing, I started to choke and cough. A drop of pee popped out on the tip of my penis.

Sister Edward Marie closed the door and pressed the small of her back into the brass doorknob.

“Stop that coughing, immediately,” she said.

I bit my lower lip and directed my attention to the front of the room. I recited a prayer to the Saint

of Urology and fixed my eyes on Sister's enormous oak desk. I tried to imagine its width in cubits but forgot what cubits were. It was a monstrosity and she used it as showcase for bizarre knick-knacks. Her favorite bric-a-brac was a handsome ceramic head of St. John the Baptist with matching platter. Once on a quiz about the gifts bestowed by the Holy Ghost, she tossed the head into the air before each question. She possessed a grand collection of ceramic crosses. And there were books, ancient as alchemy, with gold spines that read:

FAMOUS CATHOLIC CURSES OF THE  
THIRTEENTH CENTURY  
SELF-FLAGELLATION MANUAL  
TEACHING THE YOUNG EXQUISITE FEARS

And the one she used the most:

THE BOOK OF HELL

She loved to quote from this giant volume – the definitive collection of nightmares about eternal flames penned by various lost souls down through the ages. When it failed to hold our interest, she pointed to the fresh hickory sticks attached to the front of her desk with masking tape. A sign beneath them read:

PAY ATTENTION BOYS AND GIRLS!

The rest of the room paled in interest next to her command post. She kept the shades lowered on the

windows in the room, except when there was a morning funeral at Francis McDuffy's Funeral Parlor across the street from the school. Then the shades flew up and she required us to watch the sad cars leave the corpse palace. She made us earn a 300-day indulgence by saying with her in unison: *Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.*

A new poster on the bulletin board to the right of the chalkboard in the front of the room was the single change in décor during my absence. Sister used the bulletin board to display the major Catholic events during the last two thousand years. The new poster revealed an eye-catching version of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin. Depicted as a young girl with a peaches and cream complexion, this rendition of the virgin had her blasting off a planet knee-deep in salacious vipers. A gold cloud floated about the virgin's head, and above the cloud, a large, Michelangelo-like blue hand, waited for her.

Not everyone left the world from Franny McDuffy's curbside.

Back at her desk, Sister Edward Marie stood before us like an emaciated Amazon queen. She released a volley of poison arrows in my direction from her venomous eyes. Her voice caused pain.

"Yes, now class, what was I talking about before Mr. Murphy and Raymond came to the door?" she said.

She prized her exact words after an interruption, and when someone gifted and brave enough to spew them back did so, she grew excited as flies on

fresh dung.

Thirty hands went up in a simultaneous plea:  
*Sister, sister, sister.*

A grin swept across her face and she rubbed her hands together at a smoky pace. The fire in her eyes leapt on a frail angel in the second row.

“Speak up and tell me, Annie,” she said. “What was I talking about?”

“Hell, sister,” Annie said. “You were about to describe to us the pain and purpose of Hell.”

“Yes, the pain and purpose of Hell. Very good, Annie. But was I intending to address the pain and purpose of Hell as recorded in THE BOOK OF HELL, young lady?” she said.

Annie hesitated. A few hands jumped into the air. The poison in my bloodstream from her venomous eyes got to work. My hands and feet started to tingle; my ears buzzed. Uncertainty was the work of the Devil. It bugged the nun.

“Well, Annie, did I indicate I would quote from the book? Was the splendid volume in my hands?”

More uncertainty. A small coffin descended into the classroom. All hands went back to folded position. The time had come to shatter this little angel with a voice tuned to crack even the best of celestial china. Sister Edward Marie cranked up the decibels.

“Well, then young lady, if I wasn’t holding THE BOOK OF HELL in my hands or hadn’t acknowledged that what I was about to say was a quote from it – before the rude knock on my door – then I probably wasn’t intending to use it! Don’t

you agree, you little sinner?” she said.

Annie’s face shattered like a stained glass halo hit by a feedback glitch at a rock concert and fell in jagged pieces on her desk.

“I’m addressing you, Annie!” Sister said. “Don’t you agree?”

“Yes, sister,” Annie said, her voice lost in a swamp of tears.

“Very well then, Annie,” Sister said, lowering her voice. “I was simply improvising on the pain and purpose of Hell. Does the class understand the meaning of the word, *improvise*?”

Hands went up again but she called on no one. She had had enough interruptions. It was time to blow her horn and she filled her lungs to capacity before scorching us with her sound.

*Hell is a very mean place, children.*

*Hell is FIRE, boys and girls.*

*FIRE that never dies.*

*Listen, even if you took all the water in the world  
and all the FIREMEN sprayed it on the FLAMES  
they would not extinguish.*

*They BURN eternally, boys and girls.*

*And the FLAMES, children, how HOT and nasty  
they are to skin.*

*They are HOTTER than mommy’s stove.*

*HOTTER than a galaxy of suns.*

*HOTTER than all the bombs ever dropped.*

*HOT, boys and girls.*

*HOT! HOT! HOT!*

A sincere jazzman of terror, she blew at us with all of her might, with each fiery insight building on the one before it. She sucked in massive amounts of air to fuel her raging lick, as beads of sweat formed along the border of her forehead and cardboard headdress. She glared at me, retrieved her pointer, and started to strike her desk with it. Stray dogs outside the building howled for an encore. She blew a second verse.

*Boys and girls, the FLAMES of HELL are special.  
Beautiful as long-legged dancers  
They tap across condemned bodies like Mr. Bo Jangles  
himself.  
They dance and wiggle and spurt and squirm.  
They BURN children.  
BURN! BURN! BURN!  
For all time they SCORCH the souls of lousy sinners.  
And don't think for an instant the bodies turn to ash  
VAPORIZE  
under the intensity of the FLAMES.  
NO! NO! NO!  
HELL is a magical place of pain.  
The bodies feel and respond with the TERROR OF  
SELF-IMMOLATION.  
But they do not perish.  
NEVER!  
They are not offered the luxury of EMBER  
consciousness.  
No, children! The bodies in HELL are alive in the  
FLAMES.  
Eternally alive for the complete tour of*

## TIMELESSNESS.

Sister Edward Marie's improvisations flowed through my brain like molten rock. I saw the flames – elegant as ballerinas – dance up and down arms and legs and pirouette across the eyes and heads of the damned. I was one of them – a geyser of hellish flames erupted from the scar on my nose. Labored and sweating, the nun ordered us to close our eyes and put our heads on our desks in silent prayer while she caught her breath.

“Whisper to the Lord that you are sinners,” she said between deep breaths.

I tried but failed to contact with the Heavenly Father. She didn't give us much time.

“Heads up, class, and eyes on the front board. The Lord has heard your prayers.”

She tapped the board with chalk and wrote in flowing script the words *self-immolation* and *ember consciousness*. She was still winded from her performance and clutched her side as she wrote.

“We will consider these new vocabulary words, children. Please enter them into your vocabulary notebooks. I will give you the time and some help looking them up a bit later. For the next few minutes, please open you catechisms and answer the study questions on the Fall of Mankind,” she said.

I had to get through the catechism exercise to regain membership in her class. I was entering the response, *fig leaf*, into the space provided for question three when her voice bounced off my

head like a baseball.

“Raymond, I’d like a moment with you in the cloak room,” she said.

Drops of pee inched their way down my legs and my intestines moaned like a sick ghost. The cloak room was the walk-in closet in the back of the classroom where we kept our coats, hats, boots, and rubbers. To meet Sister Edward Marie inside of it was like calling up Franny McDuffy and booking the precise day you wanted in on his operation. I left my seat and walked down the aisle with concrete feet. Classmates refused to look at me and stayed busy writing inspired answers in sacred blanks. I squeezed my legs together when the pee reached the rim of one of my socks. I entered the room like the next one in line at a pay toilet.

“Shut the door behind you, Raymond,” she said. “I will be with you shortly.”

I closed the door and cowered in the darkness. Like the confessional box, the cloak room gained its power and mystery through the absence of light. I examined my conscience and made a small confession:

“Bless me Father for I have sinned. It has been a week since my last confession. These are my sins: I picked my nose in front of one of my mom’s best friends. I put canned peas in my father’s underwear. I came down with the chicken pox.”

I moved through the darkness, tripped on a boot and caught a coat hook in the side of my head. Stunned, I heard the Queen of Horror tell the class that a single sound uttered or pencil dropped

during her visit with me would give others the chance to make a cloak room pilgrimage. I took a deep breath and felt a trickle of blood on my ear. I’d get the hickory stick for sure.

When the door opened, my heart flipped into overdrive. The quick flash of light from the classroom revealed a face devoid of human emotion. Sister Edward Marie knew how to use darkness to her advantage. Her very presence in the darkness took control of my sphincter muscle. I cut a fart. She was on me quick, sinking sharp talons into my shoulders. I cut another fart, before a series of them popped off in the darkness like insipid firecrackers. Her voice swung into my ears like a rusty gate.

“Raymond, do you know what you are?” she said.

She worked her talons deeper into my shoulders. I thought the time had come for her to fly me to the chicken pox tree and nail me to it. I tried to answer her but no words came out of my mouth.

She repeated her question.

“Raymond, do you know what you are?”

“No, Sister. No, I don’t know what I am.”

“Why not, Raymond? Haven’t I taught you?”

“Yes, Sister. You’ve taught me.”

“Very well then, Raymond. Who made you?”

“God made me, Sister.”

“And why did God make you, Raymond?”

“To know, love, and serve Him in this world and be happy with him in the next.”

“And do you love your God, Raymond?”

I squirmed beneath her grip while the next series of firecrackers went off in the darkness. She shook me back and forth and retaliated to the more vigorous sound and smell with a smack across my face.

“Answer me, you little sinner!” she said.

“Yes, Sister,” I said. “I do love Him with my whole heart, mind, and soul.”

“Then why do you disobey our Master? Only naughty boys contract chicken pox. You know that, don’t you, Raymond?”

She struck me again and I flashed on my classmates nailed to the trees in front of the school. Blood trickled from the corners of their mouths. Suddenly, I was on one of the trees looking down at my parents who were planting flowers around it. I screamed as her talons bore into my flesh. I cried out in pain:

“Yes, Sister! Please, Sister. Please, don’t hurt me!”

“Don’t please sister me, you filthy sinner. What did you do, Raymond, to become so bad? Did you forget to say your prayers?”

“No, Sister.”

“Did you forget to place your offertory envelope in the collection basket?”

“I would never forget to do that, Sister!”

“Then what was your offense against God the Almighty? Confess it to me now! Or God help you!”

“I don’t know, Sister. I woke up one morning covered with scabs!”

She dug into raw nerves and searched my face with infrared eyes. There was a touch of carrion on her breath. She grew hysterical.

“Raymond! Only bad boys with impure thoughts, boys who pee their pants, smell like urine, and fart too much, wake up covered with scabs!”

“Yes, Sister. I smell really bad.”

A full load had settled in behind the last blast. I sucked in and up on my intestines and prayed my sphincter would pass her test.

“Do you know what happens to bad, smelly boys with impure thoughts?”

“No, Sister.”

There was a slight pause and then she started to convulse. Wave after wave of electric tremors entered my body through her fingers. We shook like a lake whipped by black winds. She bore witness in a wild voice.

“The Devil visits them, Raymond! He tries to pry their souls out of their dirty bodies. And tonight, Raymond, THE UGLY ONE will call on you! He’s not friendly, Raymond! He will steal into your room after your mom and dad have gone to sleep. He is after your SOUL, Raymond! Do you understand?”

I swallowed hard when the first turd rolled down my leg onto the floor.

“Can you see him, Raymond? Do you know what to do, my nasty little boy?”

Boiling saliva dripped from her mouth, burning my forehead and eyelids. I didn’t care. I wanted to



find out what to do. If there was an antidote for the UGLY ONE'S visit, I wanted it and fast.

"No, Sister. What must I do? Please tell me! I promise to be a good boy and never get sick again!"

I twisted from her grip, fell to the floor, and kissed her feet. She kicked me across the room and howled at my weakness. I bounced off the wall, just below a line of coats, and slid into a pile of boots and rubbers.

"Poor little Raymond. You must leave a light on in your bedroom closet. And you must bless yourself over and over again. Never stop blessing yourself! If you do, you're doomed. The Devil will hop into your soul the moment you stop. Then it is all over for you, Raymond. He will toss you around the room and out the window. Your body will die in the grass as the UGLY ONE dashes off to Hell with your immortal soul!"

She stopped yelling and for the next few moments took huge breaths to control her body's tremors. When she regained her composure, she told me to stand up, stop crying, and begin to consider the task ahead of me.

"Do you understand what you must do, Raymond?" she said.

"Yes, Sister," I said.

"I hope so," she said. "Now remain in the cloak room until I have one of the children come to get you."

She opened the door and left. I stood in the darkness for an eternity, another turd rolled down my leg into the puddle around my feet. The great

red face of the infinite demon whirled through my mind. The Voice of Hell called out"

"I'M GOING TO GET YOU, RAYMOND!"

I was in big trouble.

## NOTES

187. (Chunk-0-Novel). Just the other day in the newspaper the Pope came out and said that Hell is not a place but a separation from God. This was not the prevailing attitude in the Fifties.

## DAY NINETEEN

According to D, the true indicator of intelligence is not finishing stuff. Forget the SAT's, the GRE's, the Miller (Tastes Great!) Analogies, and all the other ad infinitum assessments we take and give to each other to get a bead on intelligence. **"Sorry, Charlie."** IQ points accrue when we bail out on things. The frenzied world of completed projects and tasks leaves us dull and slow-witted. We start to mumble incoherently in the presence of new office buildings before the lightning rods are screwed in and workers leap from the scaffolding. Hand in something done and on time to the boss and watch the drool pour out of his mouth. **"Well, isn't that special."**

My first father-the-law was a genius of the undone. The first time I entered his house to pick his daughter up for a date, I grew breathless at his unabashed genius. Light sockets dangled from ceilings in testimony to unfinished electrical work. Doors off hinges and partially planed (scrapings still on the floor) reflected his belief in a carpentry job well undone. However, his masterpiece was his unfinished new kitchen. Like all great artists, he drew on strong emotions to create the next form for the humble masses to consider and praise. In the kitchen, his personal feelings took over. His family didn't love him, enough or sufficiently, and this basic insight was enough for him to refuse to connect the new kitchen sink to the requisite pipes. Consequently, his children had to wash the dishes

in the bathtub after each meal. I was too stunned to shout out: Brilliant! the first time I saw the plates from a fine Italian meal floating in the sudsy water of the tub. **"Wilbur!"**

My own Dad had his own version of finishing nuttin. **"I'll murder ya."** His art of not getting it done entailed quitting the various jobs he had during his lifetime before they produced any kind of security for himself and his family. I'm not saying he did this deliberately because he felt he had to do it because he was smart. Rather, there was just nothing that could be done about it because he was smart. Like D pointed out, he had the sign.

Even my best friend and patron is a Michaelangelo of the incomplete. With persistence, love, and diligence, he has worked for many years on the old house he lives in with his wife on top of a lovely hill in Binghamton. He has worked on the house from the time I've known him, and though the progress has been stunning, the house remains unfinished. There's no doubt in my mind that he's just too damn smart. **"Oh, Ricky!"**

Of course I consider myself a gifted unfinisher. **"Ah, Geez."** Forget trying to finish a house, I have trouble finishing a short story. My desk drawers are filled with unfinished stories, poems, dreams, scams, routines and visions. **"No way!" "Way!"** But the monarch of all unfinished projects is my unfinished novel. I've worked for 18 years on that mother, and I'm not even close to finishing it. It's a gigantic *Mound* of unfinished business and a

constant inspiration and example to me of how to proceed with other projects in my creative life. Without the *Mound* staring me in the face, I probably would've considered finishing this memoir. Not a chance with it around. The *Mound* is proud and guards my intelligence like a dictator. Go ahead; flip ahead to the end of the memoir. See how it ends on Day Twenty-Five, not Day Fifty, without even a conclusion or a summary of insights life has revealed to me. It's the *Mound*. Blame it on the *Mound*!

This is why my chunk-o-novel innovation excites me so much. "Chunk" lets me do a little house cleaning and recycle some of the *Mound* into another unfinished format. The *Mound* doesn't mind and just because I'm totally committed to never finishing the thing, doesn't mean I'm opposed or unwilling to share a detailed synopsis of the *Mound* or give my readers a peak at its beginning. **"And away we go."**

But before I do that, I must share the following quote from Celine's novel, *Journey to the End of the Night*, with you. It was this quote that inspired me to write the *Mound*.

"The biggest defeat in every department of life is to forget, especially the things that have done you in, and to die without realizing how far people can go in the way of crumminess. When the grave lies open, let's not try to be witty, but on the other hand, let's not forget, but make it our business to record the worst of human viciousness we've seen

without changing one word. When that's done, we can curl up our toes and sink into the pit. That's work enough for a lifetime." (p. 18).

I entered Celine in my notebook in 1985. In 1985, I was quite bitter about things that had happened and were happening to others and me around the world. Celine's words were chosen to motivate me to tell the unabridged tale of my upbringing and life in the second half of the 20th century. The "chunks" so far *Birth* and *Christian Soldier's Academy*, offered in the memoir are from my unfinished novel (*Mound*). In the *Mound*, I'm a character called Fist. Born as a knot, I receive telepathic communications from the past, present, and future on the backs of my clenched fists. My fists are always blue and were blue from the moment of my birth – the preferred color for telepathic messages. The messages are sent by a board of philosophers who live in eternity and serve as my mentors. I'm stranded by them on the wheel of birth and death until I perform an act that enables the human race to progress a microdot in its evolution on earth. Essentially, I have to knock out the **Pantex Plant** in Amarillo, Texas. This assignment is rather recent and the result of blowing previous assignments issued by the board during my past life times. There are some things in the *Mound* that are true and not simply the product of an **overactive imagination**. A partial list includes:

My real hands were blue and clenched in fists on the day I was born.

I was dropped on my head when I was six months old.

I did make a habit of banging my head against hard objects after my initial fall to the ground.

Nuns did hit me on occasion.

Dad could play rough at times.

In 1985, though I was logging time as a single father, I still managed to find time to be pissed off about some of the above things and needed to work them out in *Mound* form. The prologue to the *Mound* reads as follows:

*I have been putting my story off like a hemorrhoid operation. I support a variety of excuses. There is the garbage to take out. My kids need milk for their Cheerios. What if the boss catches me writing at work? For where else could I write? I haven't inherited the time to get up, plug in the coffee, and begin. I am not sure why. I am sure it has to do with some metaphysical error of judgment I made in the distant past. There are plenty of former cycles I've been told.*

*Then of course there are my obsessions. Alarm clocks, nightmares, blue shoes, crank calls, and plenary indulgences. I won't burden you. They are part of my skin. I breathe them in and out like good old fresh air. I am a regular Jocasta. A metronome of worries and concerns. Tick. Tock. Tick.*

*I think I am going to have a **heart attack**.*

*Besides I lack the proper motivation. I haven't read the *Fall of the Roman Empire*. I am too lazy to look for my *Baltimore Catechism #2*. I am having trouble with the questions: *Who made me? Why did Who Make me? The flow is not there. Lao Tsu has been fitted with concrete shoes. Too many wild yaks are leaving suicide notes for their mothers. And the big reason for the stall. I'll fail. I'll be rejected. The post office guys will laugh at me. I should know better. No one wants to read the tale of another stinking life on the good ship Lollipop. Spare us the auto-biographics, Jack!**

*But, I've been feeling better lately. Small joys and bright lights pop off in my head like Chinese firecrackers. I understand Miller's advice: Drop below the surface. Dive in without a life jacket. Cut the rope tethering you to shore. I believe him. Sure I have noose burns on my neck. But I can swim. And if the Furies want to take a dip with me. If they'd like to discover the miracle of shark teeth. So be it. Jump in boys and girls. The water is fine. The waves are tidal.*

*It's 1985. A good time to write. A bad time to publish. I know this because I am no one. The oil companies have the publishing houses in their greasy pockets. Smear a plot with petroleum jelly and you're in luck. If you have an agent with the smell of an exhumed dinosaur, so much the better. I read in *Esquire* that universities are being assigned the task to define the new classics. This tough job has become their*

responsibility. Young writers are counseled to get their verbose asses into MFA clinics. It's the only way to get read. The fortunate will be knighted by their bogus masters. Where does that leave me? Who in the hell will find or have the time to read a tale told by a loser in a lost town? So much for feeling good.

Everything is dead in some way. God, he dead. The novel, she dead.

The poem? What about the fucking poem? Corpse city, ages and ages ago. So what if 90% of the people on 100% of the world's streets are suffering chest pains from lack of stimulation. They're wearing their video caps. And if a sweet little zephyr blows them off their heads? Big deal! It's the century. Words and nuclear madness just don't mix. Television is the olive in the martini of chain reaction.

Sartre said before he died that he was never in despair. I have a picture of him tacked on my bedroom wall. He is standing on a bridge with a pipe in his mouth. The caption reads: "I was never in despair." Good for him. Neither was the guy on the railing next to him transforming his body into a swan. Hurray then for being and nothingness. Horray for the worm at the heart of existence. Keep up the good work. Eat yourself into ecstatic oblivion.

I mention these things prior to my tale for no reason. It rains when it wants to as far as I can tell. But it is a nice day in nowhere. The birds are singing and I had kisses for lunch. Chances are good if you're reading this

manuscript you found it in a trashcan or under a rock. (That's where it was placed.) It's a gift, nevertheless. And I could give two shits if the boss catches me writing, or the fluorescent lights poison me, or the noise of the freaking computer printers drives me insane. A gift is a gift. God bless St. Tom Aquinas. For just pay for a fair day's work in *this century* is doing precisely what you want, when you want, regardless of the consequences.

Here then, America, is another one of your beautiful sons with a mouthful of archetypes.

It wasn't a detailed synopsis.

## NOTES

188. D. Fyodor Dostoevsky
189. “Sorry, Charlie.” A tuna.
190. “Well, isn’t that special.” The church lady.
191. Brilliant. No note. Just emphasis.
192. Wilbur. “A horse is a horse of course of course...”
193. “I’ll murder ya.” Moe-speak.
194. “Oh, Ricky!” The *I Love Lucy* show has been traveling into outer space for the past fifty years. At this point, it has passed 10,000 stars.
195. “No way!” “Way!” Wayne and Garth conversing.
196. “Ah, Geez.” A. Bunker.
197. “And away we go.” The fat man. Jackie Gleason. My Dad often used this expression to exit our house after an unpleasant event or disagreement. It’s a sideways move employing a leg kick and swinging arms. Effective.
198. Pantex Plant. I don’t have the time to go through the *Mound* for too much information on

this plant. Here’s what I remember about it. It’s the only nuclear weapons assembly and disassembly facility in America. The so called “white” (nuclear) trains arrived and departed from there. Maybe they still do. In recent years the Plant came up with a plan to store the plutonium triggers from decommission warheads. The fact that the Plant sits on top of a large natural aquifer doesn’t seem to bother anyone. Also, more people that believe in the *Rapture* live in Amarillo than anywhere else. In the *Mound*, I take advantage of that fact and become a born again minister - Billy-Bob Smith. Billy-Bob works at the Plant during the day and threatens his congregation at night with tales of what they can expect if they misbehave in their lives. It’s from this cover Billy-Bob plans his act of sabotage. It’s a tall order

199. **overactive imagination.** My mother claimed I had one. In fact, she went on the record with family and friends to say that “things” that I reported as happening to me were in fact “fantasies” of my overactive imagination.

200. **kids.** Miss and Joe, remember, were eleven and eight and half respectively at this time.

201. **obsessions.** Obsessions are tricky, hard to shake, and cause considerable mental stress and distress. Where do they come from? It’s sort of like asking which came first, the birth trauma or the egg? The head boink or the egg? The orthodox

Roman Catholicism or the egg? The extra brain cells or the egg? The fill-in-the-blank or the egg? It's important to recognize them (look right into them) for what they are and move on. It's not always easy but there are not too many options. It's always good to talk with someone you trust about them - good friend or therapist. Whatever works for you.

**202. heart attack.** See poem.

### MASSIVE CORONARY

My dad died drinking  
a Bud while fishing  
in a stream  
he located when finished  
with people:  
a massive coronary on  
the rocks.

His second wife  
told me about his black face  
and the single tear  
flowing from his right eye.

She told me when he was alive:  
I love your old man.  
I love you.  
What else is there to do but love  
drink your beer and go to  
the toilet?

All last night my heart  
was sore and beat like a stone  
skipped across water.  
My breath came packaged in nails  
and rusted needles.

I cried for my ex-wife  
to hold me  
to wipe away the image  
of a small boy  
dying on his mother's back porch.

Poets dwell too much  
on death.  
It's a sad occupation  
with the obvious benefits.

(from *White Man Appears On Southern California Beach*, p.16)

**203. The Fall of the Roman Empire.** A. Toynbee is my guess.

**204. Baltimore Catechism #2.** What are the chances that it's online?

**205. Furies.** Furies are not boys but nasty winged goddesses with serpentine hair from Greek and Roman Mythology. There were three of them: Alecto, Mequera, and Tisiphone. They avenged and punished doers of unavenged crimes. I think



Wm. Bartlett in his book, *Irrational Man*, considered the Furies as elements and/or manifestations of the irrational in the human mind. I'm not sure about this claim. It could be totally erroneous. It's been a long time since I wrote the introduction to my unfinished novel and read his book. However, I know that I wasn't thinking of Greek goddesses with serpentine hair when I wrote it.

But the Greeks were onto something with these goddesses, and it's hard not to think about, not only the unavenged crimes of individuals, but also the unavenged crimes committed by nations and societies. As Americans what do we see when we look into and at the history of Native Americans on this continent after our colonial arrival (see B. Bush's *Inherit The Blood*)? Do we call our actions genocide? Do we know how many Indians died or were killed during the settlement of the country? And what about our treatment of African-Americans or the fact that we were the first nation to drop an atomic bomb on another nation? We can list our reasons in history books for our actions, but do the Furies care about the reasons? Let's not get too American here. What about the other nations of the world - England, Russia, China - for example, and all the crap that's gone down in these societies in the spirit of conquest, imperialism and control. Unavenged crimes.

In some ways, it's possible to see a link between the Furies and the concept of karma, karma as in a sense of balancing - a broader system of justice in

the arteries and veins of the Universe itself. A justice not simply based on our human notions of law. Even if the Furies and karma are just deep projections of our minds, it's time to get our act together. It's time for an evolutionary leap out of violence and into a bigger notion of what it means to be alive. I like Henry Miller's citizen of the world approach for starters and then moving on to citizens of the solar system and finally the universe. For more on the final stage check out Tom Robbins' wacky *Half-Asleep in Frog Pajamas*. At the very least, let's say we're sorry to those we've wronged.

**206. nuclear madness.** From ducking my head under desks in the Fifties through the collapse of the Soviet Union, I've spent most of my life immersed in it. Though the scientists that maintain the Doomsday Clock have set the clock a few minutes back throughout the nineties (this is good), we're still armed to the teeth as a world. We're a nation and world of big and little guns. See Appendix X for poem *White Man Appears On Southern California Beach*. The "White Man" was written during that time period.

**207. this century.** It still is the twentieth century. Y2K was a bust. Parking at Mount Megiddo costs four bucks. I'm on Hal's time.

**208. mother.** My mom was the prettiest girl in the 1937 graduating class at St. Patrick's Academy.

209. Irrational. See poem.

THEY

They have seen the famous through eyes baked  
in the hot wombs of lost mothers

They have used the latest telecommunication  
devices  
to call premier X and actress Why  
to attend a major event  
in honor of an idea  
that would persuade rational animals  
to embrace irrational impulses  
when the sky appears to a woman with tangerine  
breasts  
to be something more than a blue vegetable  
in a pot half filled with liquid philosophers

They have nothing better to do

They have tired of pushing metal carts  
filled with root beer cans and discarded feather  
pillows  
down main streets  
under the watchful gaze of affluent bodies  
pumping gas into sad cars  
with nowhere to go

They have memorized the sidewalk rhetoric  
repeat without hesitation

the exact syllable the moon whispers  
to shapes that linger  
by rivers flowing  
through silk towns

they are here with us  
whether we like it or not

They record what we think  
when we think  
the world is a porcelain gift  
left on our doorstep  
without consequences

(from *White Man Appears On Southern California  
Beach*, p. 5). There's also a musical rendition  
of this poem by the well-known poetry band,  
"The Things." Eventually, you will be able to  
get a copy of this by clicking on my website.  
Seeing I don't have one at this point, it's not  
possible.

APPENDIX X

WHITE MAN APPEARS ON SOUTHERN  
CALIFORNIA BEACH

1

So it's my day off from the drug store  
and I've managed to rip off a few amphetamines  
'cause Sammy-boy the pharmacist is such a puke  
and the day before was so FUCKING!  
SPACED OUT!  
ON ALL THE COCAINE! AND SHIT HE  
DOES!

he stepped out for a breath of air  
'cause there were not many customers  
except a few old ladies you see everywhere in  
Santa Monica  
old and rich as hell  
wandering into shops  
to check out the latest ivory trinkets and antique  
horseshit  
till they eventually make it to the DRUG  
QUEEN  
for some talcum powder for their old salt-rusted  
skins  
and a few dull minutes of staring at bottles  
of Jean Naté and Oil of Olay

IF YOU CAN DIG THAT!

On the day of my speedDEMONheist  
I am stocking vitamin shelves

right in front of Sammy's highass counter  
near the little entrance way  
that leads to the feudal walls of Drugdom.

Sammy's job is such a push over  
his most exerting task  
is the number count of valiums and libriums  
or any new tranq some wimp salesman from  
Squibb  
or Holy Dow says is GOOD SHIT! with few  
contraindications  
and will really calm those nerve endings  
having wild neurotic guilt parties  
in the skins of frantic stressed Americans.

FOR SURE...

While all the time the fat safe drug kings and  
queens  
stuff tranquility bucks  
into mansions pools elaborate security systems  
(putting the poor stupid ferocious guard dog  
in the unemployment line)  
soothing their own Blue Blood Dendrites in  
redwood hots  
with some slick babe  
driving their Silver Royce down a stretch of  
DESERTED GUARDED PRIVATE  
PROPERTY  
hiring some imported Hindu swami to guide  
create their meditations of Obese Nirvana  
and if these fail?

Well

JOG THE BALLS OFF  
CRUSH MAGNESIUM PILLS IN THE  
MORNING O.J.  
GET TO THE EXECUTIVE TOWER  
WITH A SPEECH  
FOR SUBHUMAN EAGERBEAVER  
MANAGERS  
TO INSPIRE THE MANIC CHEMISTS  
UNDER THEIR COMMAND  
TO CREATE ANOTHER MINDLESS  
DRUG FROM THEIR ALCHEMICAL

F \$ A \$ N \$ T \$ A \$ S \$ I \$ E \$ S.

But I am stocking shelves (right)  
and Sammy is off in the alley  
taking HUGE breaths of air through his  
Novocain nostrils  
saying over and over to himself:  
HOLY SHIT! HOLY SHIT!  
like a religious ejaculation that could purge the  
drug purgatory  
from his soul  
like chemicals poured on oil slicks  
rubbed into the feathers of wasted old pelicans  
walking dumbfounded on the black beach  
after some FATFOREIGNTANKER has split a  
gut.

HOLY SHIT! HOLY SHIT!

with some lost forlorn foghorn hope in his voice  
if his plea about sacred excrement is said enough  
times

maybe a THOUSAND

a cure will happen

a Miracle on 34th

at least he'll be able to complete the day  
passing out magic antibiotics  
to the jokers who complain  
of infections of the mind.

OH, SHIT! OH, SHIT!

Jesus H. he changed the chant I thought  
placing plastic bottles filled with high potency  
on sick white aluminum shelves.

The pills in these bottles:

TheraPUEtic-GymnasTIC-sUPER-  
ALTITUDE-Vit. and Min.

EnhanCEMENTS

are huge orange mothers that should be  
scattered  
on the floors of caged elephants.

One false move swallowing one of these  
gargantuan footballs

THAT'S IT

the windpipe closes down like an organ  
stuffed with the Travel Section of the New York  
Times.

It's right then  
with these reflections racing through my brain  
I get another one of my classic ideas.  
An idea that's gonna make me a RICH  
BASTARD  
who has enough bread to ignore jobs like these  
but whose heart remains undefiled (RIGHT!)  
and passes out surplus bucks to the heroes  
who rise every morning  
report with Moronic-Robotic efficiency to the  
stupid jobs  
the kind disc jockey presidents praise as the  
source of their  
CRYSTAL CHANDELIER patriotism.

For Sure...

So if you are skeptical about my classic ideas  
'cause I'm sure you're saying  
"Oh, yeah, sure buddy, I've plenty of my own  
gems."  
But then you just sit around  
smoking  
getting loaded  
getting high  
waking the next morning  
thinking:  
"I've got a great mind but no ambition and/or  
capital etc."  
then promptly to work forgetting

THIS IS AMERICA JACK

where anything sells  
but like a dunce you're performing simplistic  
tasks  
and who could or would want to enumerate  
these  
while another gem sinks to the bottom of your  
brain  
like one more body tossed into the sea  
by the Neptune Society.

2

PET ROCKS!  
FROZEN COWSHIT UNDER GLASS!  
and the whole country goes wild blowing Xmas  
funds  
to take some home to the old relatives  
buried in grey sofa chairs.  
And as your Great Aunt fiddles with the  
package  
she says blinking soap opera eyes:  
"Oh! Honey, it's so pretty, pretty as a picture  
wrapped in its yellow bow and snow  
strawberries;  
I don't think I should open it!"

You say:

"You've got to open it, Aunt Margaret. It's  
Xmas!"

And she does, etc.  
looks and wonders  
stares right into your novelty gift orbs  
and says: "Why dear, what is this?"  
With lots of Yuks  
ARK ARK ARKS  
you say: "A cowchip!"  
And some distant relative on a piano stool  
sipping  
HARVEY'S BRISTOL CREAM  
says within earshot:  
"No wonder they call her the black sheep of the  
family."

And you explain to Maggie what a cowchip is  
why it's funny and very American, etc.  
and the old gal suddenly cracks a smile  
full of repressed stars and secret waterfalls.

Or there's even Uncle Less with cornucopia  
hearing  
sitting there in his Salvation Army suit  
with glass vision and bourbon.  
You're screaming in his leafy ear:

"IT'S A PET, LES, A PET!"

And he says with liquor-sweetened tongue:

"A GET, A GET WHAT?"  
"NO, UNCLE LESS, IT'S A PET. A PET

ROCK!"

And you show him how to fondle and whistle to  
it  
explain its dietary plan  
while Old Les belts them down  
feels that inorganic feline softly vibrate  
with wisdom of cliffs and bald eagles.

Still skeptical?  
Then how about a cigarette named DICKS?  
Let it sink in for a minute  
check it out  
a sort of antithetical response to Virginia  
YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY, BABY!  
There are all kinds of possibilities  
gads of money if the Tobacco Jerks got into it.

SMOKE A DICKS TODAY!

HAVE YOU HAD YOUR DICKS TODAY?

There you are  
Mr. American  
driving Sunset Blvd. through Hollywood  
billboards of fabulous starfaces  
tower above you  
their celluloid grins promise to suspend your  
Dog's Life  
for a few hours  
if you have twenty bucks or so.  
LOOK OUT! There up above your

consciousness  
blown out with joints beer and Roland Kirk  
is the perfect

### ABSOLUTE ZERO.

Her eyes mined from the ocean floor.  
Her lips painted with the rest dust of California  
sunssets.

Her blouse soaked against nutrient breasts.  
And between seductively pure fingers  
fingers with power to rewire your brain  
send you for days  
to the LAND OF EJACULATING DREAMS  
is a weed

stiff  
white

with pulsating smoke.

As her middle fingers rubs with unconscious  
stroke  
she invites you with soft phonetic lips:

“I’VE HAD MY DICKS TODAY, HAVE  
YOU?”

But the classic  
I mean the Duesenberg of filthy rich IDEAS  
came to me  
as I shelved vitamins and waited for the chance  
to score.

FOR SURE! FOR SURE!

I hear you.  
But if you happen to have a bottle of elephants  
take a Nader Moment with the contents.  
Beneath the NOW I’VE LEARNED MY A B  
SEAS

are rocks-fossils-minerals:

Zinc

Iron

Coal

Bauxite

Manganese

Gold

Gold!

THARS GOLD IN THEM THERE  
BOTTLES YOU LONG-EARED  
FUR-BEARIN’ VARMINT!

Yeah  
all the metamorphic stuff of Mr. Wizard Kits  
and hot lava graves  
ask a miner sucking on an inhalation tube.  
Except these bottles lack a precious mineral  
we could all stand to build a favorable tolerance  
towards.

Yes  
you’ve guessed it  
none other than GOOD OLD AMERICAN  
U-235.  
Think of it.

A milligram of the BIG U stuck between the  
folic  
and pantothenic acid  
so when the BLAST INEVITABLE arrives  
to sweep us to NEW HEAVENS PURGS  
LIMBOS AND HELLS  
we'll be set  
maybe even adapt  
as we melt  
in the ULTRA SUPER POPSICLE HEAT!  
Consider  
if we took the BIG U faithfully  
maybe  
we'd recite (TELEPATHICALLY) the  
Principle of Indeterminacy  
as Atomic Hurricanes  
dance through our bodies.

Maybe  
we could calculate our half-lives  
as we radiate deep into the electromagnetic  
maze  
of Bardos and Voids  
singing

DANCE SHIVA DANCE

DANCE THE ETERNAL NIGHT LONG!

The Ad Campaign?  
What else?  
Simple Thermal and Sexy.

A few specialists in FISSION-NUTRITION  
make a case for the health benefits of the BIG U  
churn out a book  
appear on Carson.  
Each day during the Soaps  
subliminal messages are scattered across the tube

NUKIES

are great before the tennis game  
after the sauna.  
Of course BILLBOARDS  
say  
Miss Southern California surfing atop the  
genetic MUSHROOM  
her cobalt smile  
and hairless body proclaiming

U-235 FOR THE ULTIMATE FATE!

Enough, OK,  
but feel free  
to pursue my American Dream.  
If you score megabucks  
think of me  
that's not much to ask.  
But as I was about to say  
the capsules were barely in my pocket  
when  
THE NOSE KNOWS SAMMY  
reentered Drug City  
his rosary of despair finished.



GLORY BE TO THE FATHER  
AND TO THE SON  
AND TO THE COCAINE SPIRIT.

Jesus H. he looked like some Beat Alchemist  
from the Thirteenth Century  
eyes all puffed  
heavy with sag  
like a bag lady on the streets passing out  
philosopher stones  
to skeletons asleep on heating grates  
packed in cardboard boxes.  
His entire body had the

UP AT THE CALDRON ALL NIGHT  
LOOK

reciting chants  
cooking phosphorus in delicate premonition  
bowls  
God knows what.  
When he saw me he screamed like a carnival of  
eunuchs  
playing spin the bottle with Princess Leia:  
“HAVEN'T YOU FINISHED STOCKING  
THOSE VITAMIN SHELLS!”

That's no typo error, friends.  
Mr. E.T.A. Hoffman Jr. said shells  
then pressed a finger to the right side of his

Schnozz  
snorted like a lady hippo in an Orgone Box  
and a few lingering white angels flew off  
into the catastrophe of his mind.

3

SPEED KILLS!  
believe it  
but every now and then  
with coffee Danish and blue sky  
I say: “Oh, Yeah!”  
flush a few capsules down and prepare  
to let my hair grow.

AH, A DAY OFF FROM THE DOPE  
DEALERS.

I crank my box and settle on  
what's black and white and read all over.  
I check out newsrags  
to find the ingenious story  
amid

THE MASS MURDERS IN THE  
BATHROOMS  
THE MASS SUCIDES IN THE CLOSETS  
THE MASS CORRUPTIONS AT THE  
WATER FOUNTAINS

that takes the cake  
wins the prize

a daily Pulitzer

for  
absurd  
sad  
oppressive  
ironic

## V I O L E N C E.

A story so unbelievable you get the intuitive  
feeling  
the newspaper's Ace Reporter  
has just swallowed 15 tabs of Uncle Sidney  
and when he spills his psychedelic guts into

WHO! WHAT! WHEN! WHY! HOW!  
his editors could give a flying fuck  
having relinquished long ago the distinction  
between the reality of blood  
and the fiction of it.

Anyway  
one to a million or so news items per day  
make the head and hands shake  
to such a degree  
you feel you might disintegrate  
into a pile of velvet nonsense  
awake satori-fashion to the possibility  
infinitesimal gaps between nerve endings  
have been invaded by a species of germs  
manifesting traits similar to Chubby Checker

clones.

LET'S TWIST AGAIN LIKE WE DID  
LAST SUMMER!

Get ready.

TODAY'S DUNCAN HINES SO MOIST  
AND TENDER!

You know those big tax bucks we pay for  
missiles  
and other HUGE THINGS that melt eyeballs  
sorrow  
and protect us from Commies.  
All those trillions spent so we can water  
the lawn and watch the kids play:

RING AROUND THE ROSIES  
A POCKETFUL OF POSIES  
ASHES ASHES  
WE ALL MELT DOWN!

Those mastodon bucks are a waste  
security wise  
according to the New Technology of Imminent  
Disaster.  
There are (right at this moment)

NUKES

that fit inside attaché cases and can

be detonated by dropping a dime into a public  
telephone.

The scenario is as simple  
as WORLDWIDE TERRORISM.  
Some postpostmodern guerilla dude  
some revolutionary in a Three Piece Suit  
doesn't particularly like  
say, LA,  
because of its smog  
celebrities  
because it's part of America.

So he strolls  
(Wall Street Journal tucked under his armpit)  
to the center of town  
takes time for a coke and beef burrito  
then catches a D.C. Ten  
and if it doesn't crash on take off  
enjoys bourbon and a Rocky V  
until he arrives at place unknown.  
As he copies down graffiti numbers for dates  
and blow jobs  
he drops the appropriate coin

into

THE MOUTH OF MIRACULOUS  
ADVANCEMENT

MOTHER BELL

COMPUTER SCIENCE

REACH OUT AND TOUCH SOMEONE

and he does  
melting the wings off the City of Angels.  
The technology is there.  
When hasn't it been applied?  
Ask the bald and sightless in Utah.

Scary, yes.  
But one hell of a hobby.  
My hair is growing.  
OK. About this White Man.

## DAY TWENTY

Dude, I went surfing on the Net this morning and had mucho problems with it and my computer and printing accoutrements. I got on the Net because today is St. Patrick's Day and I thought it would be cool to import some St. Patty into my memoir. I come from the Irish stockpile and have dedicated my fair share of **brain cells** to the Saint and my ethnic heritage.

Dude, the bad news started right away. My Hewlett Packard (invent) DeskJet 870 CXI Professional Series Printer was ebbled-out on ink and needed two new ink cartridges (the 45A Inkjet Print Cartridge and the 41A Inkjet Print Cartridge) to function properly. Bummer, dude. Even if I found some awesome information on the Saint, I wouldn't be able to print it out. My only option was to scribble the info. off the screen onto note paper while I put a burn on my eyes from glaring into the screen. I hate glaring into the screen, Dude. It does nothing for my **floaters**.

Dude, I freaked out and danced a little **jig** that my old lady got miffed at. During it, I shot off my mouth about the number of cans of Spam and Dinty Moore's beef stew she keeps in the pantry in case of an emergency. I went off on the fact that we have enough of that fat to feed a survivalist convention. Freakin freaks. But don't get me wrong, Dude, the old lady eats pretty well, but as she says: "I have a taste for it every now and then." I don't blame her, Dude, for her Spam weakness, I

used to think a balanced meal was a box of Cheez-its and a six-pack of **Budweiser**. But could I find an extra 45A Inkjet Cartridge and 41A Inkjet Print Cartridge anywhere in our damn abode? No way! Dude. Take your head out of the freakin' sand.

Dude, I got over it and moved on to the bullshit associated with finding something on the Net. I mean I just typed the words *St Patrick* into the search box AOL provides and Amazon.com pops up to stick its greedy paw in my pocket. Glory Hallelujah, Dude, I could buy every freakin' book every written about the Emerald Isle if I wanted. 'Tis a shame, Dude. Right before me very own eyes was a **gold-trimmed** ten-book set called *The Life and Times of the Little People*. A page-turner, no doubt, Dude, but my eyes were after information on St. Patrick, hisself. Now wouldn't you know.

Dude, **3119384** matches for St. Patrick came up after I hit the "enter" button. Talk about fish in the sea of information. I plunged into the first set of matches and read the following (the http addresses too vague to read):

75% [St. Patrick's Day](#).

Contains stories, coloring, curses and much more.

72% [AITLC Guide To St. Patrick/Saint Patrick's Day](#).

Access Indiana Teaching and Learning Center Guide to St. Patrick/Saint Patrick's Day.

71% [Saint Patrick](#).

Patron of Ireland. Feast day: March 17. St. Patrick of Ireland is one of the world's most popular saints. Along with St. Nicholas and St. Valentine, the secular world shares a love for these saints.

### 71% St. Patrick's Day.

Possibly the only national holiday that is given recognition outside its native land is St. Patrick's Day. This is a clear indication of the Irish influence through the world.

Dude, without hesitation, I maneuvered *Mickey* onto choice #3 and executed my **quick-finger** click. Without so much as a cyber **burp**, a short biographical sketch filled the screen. I grabbed a pen and started to read and take notes.

Dude, I was *long-handing* Pat's Roman parents' names (Calpurnius & Conchessa) and that fact the he was born in Scotland in 385 when a **Browser** alert sign flashed on the screen to inform me that a bunch of other https could not be accessed on the subject. Yeah? Dude, I had to click on an OK box to dis the browser alert hold-up and proceed with my investigation into the Saint's life. So I comply-a-vous and what do I get for my good will, Dude? Nothing other than the system-error bomb. I hate that freakin' bomb, Dude. It floats across the screen as a big black cannon ball with a fuse sticking out of it to let you know it has blown your ass up. I groaned, Dude; I really groaned, but there was nothing I could do but to shut down my MacPower 190 and hit the Restart button.

Dude, it's a ritual to get back where you started.

St. Patrick was somewhere in 400 AD Ireland and I was back telling my computer through a series of clicks that I didn't want to register my name with its hard-drive and that I agreed to do that on a later date. Then I had to listen to the "**white noise**" of my modem dialing up AOL, hear that I had some e-mail (You've Got Mail) before clicking on the Internet icon and returning to the pick-pocket scams of Amazon. com. Exhaust-toe-mundo, Dude! When I finally got back to St. Paddy, he had been captured by a raiding party (not identified) and brought to Ireland as a slave. Dude, the Ireland Pat entered was full of druids and pagans and he found himself herding and tending sheep until he was fourteen years old. During his enslavement, he turned to God. And Dude, before I could jot down his Roman parents were Christian, a big message box takes over the screen and tells me I'm no longer connected to the Server. Wicked bummer, Dude. I'm told in very small print that AOL is "sorry for this inconvenience" and that I need to **RESTART** my computer. Dude, I cried like a baby. I screamed. I bounced my head off the desk (Boink!) and returned to the ritual of start-up. Because I was into St. Pat, I resisted the urge to heave my access to virtual reality out the window. By the time I got the text back in front of me, my old lady had filed for divorce (just kidding!) and my **AARP** card had arrived in the mail. Hubble was fixed. I read the quote in front of me:

"The love of God and his **fear** grew in me more

and more, as did the faith and my soul was rosed, so that, in a single day, I have said as many as a hundred prayers and in the night, nearly the same. I prayed in the woods, and on the mountain, even before dawn. I felt no hurt from the snow, or ice, or rain.

A strange quote, Dude, with some beautiful but heavy passive voice. And old St. Pat, he remained in captivity until he was 20 and escaped to his home in Scotland. But then he started dreaming and a series of them implored him to return to Ireland. He took the time before returning to become a priest and worked his way up to the Bishop of Auxerre. Once a bishop he tucked the Gospel under his arm and returned to Ireland. He arrived there on March 25, 433.

Dude, legend has it that he met Dichu, a chieftain of one of the tribes, and Mr. Dichu tried to doff the Saint. Unable to kill St. Pat or even move his arms in front of the Saint (a possible reason that St. Pat escaped this dude's wrath), Dichu befriended Saint Patrick. With Dichu in his pocket, St. Patty preached for 40 years in Ireland, worked miracles, and pretty much converted the entire island to Christianity before he died on March 17, 461. Besides all of that, he had time to write his own *Confessions* (memoir).

Dude, I didn't find anything that said he drove the snakes out of Ireland. But I did find out that he used the shamrock to teach the pagans about the Trinity. At my birthday party a couple of days ago,

my old lady pasted big **green** shamrocks all over the living room and dining room walls. I had totally forgotten about their symbolic meaning, Dude.

## NOTES

210. **Net.** 6% of the people using the Internet are addicted to it like heroin. Duck Martian has his own opinion: See poem.

### THE ABSENCE OF DATA

Take your superhighway of information  
and shove it.

(from *Napkin Apologies*, Duck Martin)

211. **brain cells.** See poem.

### A MAN IN DUBLIN

A man loads the index finger of his right hand  
with pantomime bullets. In parks  
flowers receive pollen from yellow bees.  
There is an imaginary knife tucked inside his  
pants.

A loud goose is upset with a green pond.  
On his belt he clips plastic grenades.  
Lovers kiss on a famous bridge. Sudden urine  
flows from city statues.  
The man is up for a good time.  
The bathroom mirror retains his grin.  
Pigeons have red feet.  
It is a friend from childhood.  
Made from the sadness he saw in old  
comedians.  
Soot on stone buildings is called black lace.

The man's hands are made of dirt. In the  
backseat  
of an empty car silence is defined.  
A dark clown in his brain wants a drink.  
The sea deposits gray words on endless shores.  
When there is work it ends in long lines for  
waiting.  
Smoke trails move across the sky.  
This time the man is in Dublin.  
Tomorrow he'll be seen in Pittsburgh.  
Surface like a beached whale in central Ohio.  
In Beijing he'll light a cigarette outside of  
McDonald's.  
Now he walks down Baggot Street.

The clown's thirst is full of bears. It was  
a tough week on the streets. Balloons flew  
into sea gulls with wings of fire.  
Jokes got trapped beneath the wheels of black  
cars.  
The red nose smelled bad. The man  
refused to practice his moves.  
Open the door when nobody's there.  
Close it on a crowd of questions.  
Move inside glass.  
Kill the neighbor with funny lips.  
I need a drink goddamn it.  
The man steps on sparse shadows.  
Beggars with their backs to the moon.  
There has to be victims.  
Inside a pub he listens to men play Irish blues.  
He understands a red face is a stoic expression.

He shouts at fingers to move faster.  
A violin leaps past the history of sheep on sheer  
ridges.  
The man grins. Swigs his Guinness.  
The pub reflects the fate of conversation.  
Stars shudder. Grenades explode.

(from *Modulations*, pp. 30 –31)

212. **floaters.** I have them. I swat at them. I sometimes think they're mosquitoes. There's one squashed on my bedroom wall.

213. **jig.** a lively dance in triple time.

214. **Budweiser.** The last Bud in my refrigerator is called a Dickweiser.

215. **gold-trimmed.** In 1980 I worked as a page at the Binghamton Public Library. A page puts books back on the shelves after they're returned and checked in. I had a brief romance with a woman who worked in the reference section. She was smart, good-looking, could dance, and knew her books. She turned me onto the work of James Stephens, a contemporary of James Joyce. I enjoyed Stephens's work, especially his *Crock of Gold*. As I recall, the donkey in the *Crock* could talk or at least communicate its thoughts to the other characters in the book. I was a single dad at this time in my life. See poem.

## LITERATE ANIMALS

I spend most of my time convincing people animals can talk.

This all got started because I met a woman who enjoyed Disco, wore red party dresses, and believed most animals did have a lot to say.

I was on welfare back then and used my stamps to buy rock lobster tails and specialty cheeses that went well with cheap wine and Wheat-Thins.

"Look," she used to say to me  
"who do you think finishes  
the books you can't or won't finish?"

She worked at the local library with me.  
I was a page.  
She manned the reference desk.

Once she pulled me into the service elevator and pressed B for basement.  
On the way down she kissed me hard on the lips.

"I love your face," she said.  
"Who do you think told me to say that."

216. **3119384.** *Put in a comma, please.* Take on Bill Walton's: *Make a foul shot, please.*



217. **quick-finger.** Tom Haines and I heard of a guy from Irish lore called Hair-Trigger Dick Martin during our journey through Ireland. Hair-Trigger came out of my father's school of thought: Shoot first, ask questions later. But even Hair-Trigger changed. By the end of his life, Hair-Trigger was known as Humanity Dick Martin.

218. **burp.** Alternative for glitch.

219. **Browser.** Pet name? Here, Browser.

220. **white noise.** Only reference to Don DeLillo.

221. **RESTART.** Me freakin', Dude. Not a note.

222. **AARP.** "Old man look at my life, I'm a lot like you are." (Only reference to Neil Young.)

223. **fear.** See note 224. "This is scary stuff."

224. **Confessions.** Robert Lowell was the **leader of the pack** of a group of confessional poets. I think John Berryman and Ann Sexton were part of the group. I like Berryman's Henry poems.

I spent a lot time in the confessional as I kid. The nuns told us that God was a magnificent accountant and recorded all the sins committed by an individual in a big black book. Some sins (mortal) left indelible black marks on the soul and only Confession could wipe them out. I always felt light and airy after going to Confession.

Confession possessed an anti-gravity element. In high school, I became an aficionado of the General Confession. This type of Confession precluded the telling of specific sins and let you off the hook (absolution) by simply saying you were sorry for all the transgressions committed since the last Confession. During one high school retreat I made nine general Confessions in a single day. I was pretty gone on Catholicism at the time in my life.

This is scary stuff. In Catholicism a person's responsible for thoughts and deeds. Forget the deeds, it's a total pain to become responsible for all the thoughts cruising through the head. The mind seems made of light and darkness and Catholicism is not into a dialectical relationship between the two. Instead of letting go of your thoughts, seeing the mind as an illusion, you end up suppressing and repressing thoughts and praying like hell. You enter the trap. The trap of control the Church has been so good at over the years. This is not to say that I'm not sorry for many things in my life, I am. I'm just not that fond of Catholicism's metaphysical methods and techniques.

225. **green.** See poem.

#### ETHEL ON POWDERING

"This powdering is serious,  
the doctors depend on it.

Sure, the powder gets in your nose  
and lungs,

(Erin Go Braugh)

I suppose it ain't  
no good for you.  
But these gloves,  
why, they touch  
hearts and livers  
even defective bladders  
with green urine  
like the beer you get  
on St. Patty's day, kid.  
The powder feels  
good to them doctors,  
reminds them of their wife's fanny  
after a shower,  
takes their minds off  
the blood spilling on the floor."

(from *Dream of Long Headdresses: Poems from a  
Thousand Hospitals*, 30.)

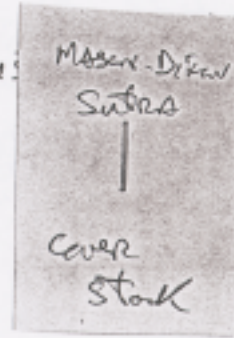
# DAY TWENTY-ONE

Theresa + Vicki -

Call if you have questions!  
603-472-3466

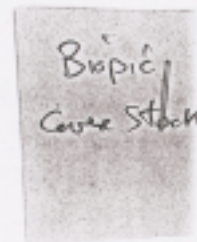
## I - The Mason-Dixon Sutra

- A) dummy book enclosed see layout ques
- B) Quote see 400 books - 5 1/2" x 8 1/2"
  - 1) Using 60lb paper stock see text
  - 2) Using light gray see cover stock
  - 3) Whether to screen photos or not?
- C) Spine is on cover page in hard copy -



## II Biopics

- A) Blank Page before Frontis page  
(note blue pencil Roman Numerals I + II) end (blue pencil) pg 29 + 30
- B) Reduce to blue pencil till progression begins
- C) Reduce to 5 1/2" x 8 1/2" (even if you need to play with distance between title + author's name on cover -
- D) Quote some 200 books 8 1/2" x 5 1/2"
  - 1) Using standard paper 50lb white
  - 2) Using Cherry card stock



## NOTES

226. DAY TWENTY-ONE is the handwritten instructions Peter Kidd left for the printers at Celecom Corp in East Long Meadow so they could get started on his next two chapbooks: *The Mason-Dixon Sutra* by Peter Laska, Bob Synder, and Joe Barrett and *Biopic* by Joel Dailey. For some reason the printers were out when we got there and Peter decided to just *note* them. They had printed the other titles published by Igneus Press (See Appendix Y) and Peter felt it was best just to leave the note and give them a call later. Waiting around is a pain in the ass and we were on a free day from our jobs and responsibilities.

The Small Press world has played a big part in my life. Knute Skinner, former editor of the *Bellingham Review* and Signpost Press, published 16 of my “hospital” poems in the 1980 Spring edition of the *Review* and later in the decade published the entire collection of my hospital poems as *Dream of Long Headdresses: Poems From A Thousand Hospitals*. The poems Knute published in 1980 put me over the top in the number of poems required to apply for a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship, and in 1982, I received a fellowship for those poems. Joel Dailey (See Appendix Z), editor of *Fell Swoop*, has published two chapbooks of mine: *Between the Eyes*, and *Time To Go*, and one by Duck Martian, *Napkin Apologies*. He also has taken a poem for every issue of *Fell Swoop* since its inception (50 issues). Tom Haines started Bottom Fish Press just to publish

*White Man Appears on Southern California Beach*. He actually painted a **building** in downtown Binghamton to come up with the money. Tom also created the cover paintings for the *White Man* and *Modulations*. Peter Kidd brought out my *Negation of Beautiful Words* and introduced me to Sylvester Pollet who published a chaplet of mine called *Marks*. Greg Boyd of Asylum Arts brought out *Modulations* in 1998, and recently told me, it has become one of the best selling books for his press. Finally, there are all the hard-working editors at various magazines that have published my work over the years. To all of you, my heartfelt appreciation.

Kidd believes that small and regional presses are the life-blood and energy of American poetry. I agree with him. Small presses live in the marrow of the bones of American poetry. Without them everything dries up and dies. This understanding is understood by so very few. Just the other day a **coworker** was telling me about a young poet, a Young Harvard Fellow, who was expected to win the Nobel Prize one day. The expectation for winning the award (he’s only in his early thirties) comes from the fact that he is a Young Harvard Fellow and Nobel Prize winners are born there. I listened with some interest but allowed Steve Miller’s words...some people call me a space cowboy...to continue in my mind. The canon authors and mainstreamers do not have or own the final word on poetry. The real canon of American poetry is huge and inclusive. Like water it comes in

a variety of options: oceans, rivers, waterfalls, brooks, streams, tributaries, puddles, pools, bubbles, raindrops, vapor, clouds, snow, and ice.

**227. building.** Tom painted the old Fair Store Building in an eye-popping brick red. The building overlooks the Chenango River and hits you right in the face as you cross the Court Street Bridge.

**228. coworkers.** See poem.

#### IMPORTANT PROSE POEM

I wore an undershirt under my regular shirt to work today. Usually, I don't do this. So I was surprised when not a single colleague stopped to talk with me about my radical shift in behavior. I call the people I work with at that job site *colleagues* because they don't like the term coworkers. I tried the term *coworkers* on them once after being warned never to call them *coworkers*. I mean I just showed up in the lunchroom and said: "Howdy, *coworkers!*" It didn't go over very well. The largest *coworker* got up from the table and announced he would punch me in the nose if I ever used that term again. I know what that's like. Once a man eating a roast beef dinner in a fine restaurant said he would punch me in the nose if I didn't stop using *swear words* while conversing with a friend over my roast beef dinner. I didn't even realize I was using *swear words* in my conversation. When I told the man to stop eavesdropping in on my

conversation and to start paying attention to his expletive wife, he punched me in the nose.

I've had other radical shifts in behavior happen to me before. One involved wearing baseball caps to various celebratory functions like births, weddings and funerals. Of course there were threats from distant lost cousins concerned about the appropriateness of the behavior, let alone about my choice of teams. On occasion I was escorted outside and introduced to the suddenness of flying sidewalks. Up until then I had conceded to most of my friends and *coworkers* that things that fly must have wings.

I thought the undershirt shift in my behavior was an exciting one and really wished one of my *colleagues* had picked up on it. In fact I was prepared to tell the first one who did about the experience I had last night when I didn't have an undershirt on under my regular shirt. For some reason after I had flicked off the TV and started to drift into thoughts about the days when the Star Spangled Banner signaled the end of the broadcast day, a compulsion came over me to get into my car and drive out beyond the city lights into rural darkness – which I did. Somewhere on a country road and with a vague memory of mandala-like station emblems that came on after the national anthem, I got out of my car. The night was deeply black and clear with stars that burst into and/or met my mind with such raw and magnificent

beauty that I felt a chill, a cold kiss if you will. With dumbfounded awe, I continued to stare into the night sky and thought for an instant I saw through my perceptions of what I perceived to be there to what was there. It was not like infrared telescopes or anything, but my mind opened a bit and I fell in love with it. On the way back to town, I reminded myself to wear an undershirt the next time.

229. roast beef. Day Eight with creative modification.

## APPENDIX Y

### IGNEUS BOOKS

- The Required Dance, W.E. Butts \$7  
The Day The Eighties Began, P.J. Laska \$8  
Flesh Of The New Moon, William Kemmett \$8  
Three Sleeps: A Histormance, Richard Blevins  
\$10  
A Tale of Psyche, Vincent Ferrini \$9  
Magdalene Silences, Vincent Ferrini \$10  
With the Mothers of the Playa De Mayo,  
Marquerite Guzman Bouvard, \$10  
Bear Stew, Peter Kidd \$5  
The Bradford Poems, William Kemmet \$5  
Negation of Beautiful Words, Richard Martin  
\$5  
The Magi Image, Vincent Ferrini \$10  
Never Enough Light, Sanford Dorbin \$10  
Wheeler Lane, Julia Wendell \$9.95  
If You Ask Me Where I've Been, Roger Taus  
\$10  
Second Reckoning, P.J.Laska \$5  
The Mason-Dixon Sutra, P.J. Laska/  
BobSynder/ Joseph Barrett \$10

# Lower 48

new and selected poems by

## Joel Dailey



Joel Dailey uses an extremely sharp facet of the Language Crystal to operate on a flabby world that has had the nerve to be his. As unsparring as the jagged edge is, it quakes with laughter even as it cuts. This is the poetry of the Laughing Shiv, powered by eloquence. The effect is like watching a snail shell form, language turning in on itself as the LS carves and carves its cliché-plump and pop-full meat. Dare I say it? Joel Dailey is the Robinson Jeffers of Post-Pop, an expansive nature poet whose nature is on TV. His work contains also the most thorough on-going critique of pretention in whatever form she may have been proclaimed. The shiv aims for the phoniness in the zeitgeist and comes off bloody more often than not.

*Andrei Codrescu*

"My philosophy- velocity!," says Joel Dailey (in "Infection, Detection, Rejection"), and it serves him both well and right! The poems in this book have more exclamation points, visible and invisible, than the collected works of Alexander Dumas the Elder. Perfect for both space and time capsules, they embody the delirious over-amped atmosphere of Y2K US, "where the rubber fits snugly over the arching banana... / where the Sunned & the Stunned wait / for excrement to happen." On a planet entranced by Amerikana, Joel Dailey's works are bound for international and eventually intergalactic acclaim! No question! Any questions? No? Well, then (to mildly paraphrase Doc Williams), fasten your seatbelts, ladies and gentlemen, we are going to laugh like hell!

*Anselm Hollo*

Joel Dailey's *Lower 48* is an energetic, humorous, edgy successor to Allen Ginsberg's "America." In Dailey's end of the millennium America, "pricetags dangled from the clouds" and "every personal memory I've ever cherished is/ on TV!" Dailey wanders this world of manipulative consumerism resisting its hold with his blazing stun-guns of outrage, paranoia, passion, and comedy, leaving a laminated America del Norte in his wake.

*Hank Lazer*

96 pages, perfect bound. Art by Doug MacCash.  
Publication Date: June 1999.

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### Lower 48

Double barreled exhaust  
+ mental frigidaire  
= trip out of Coincidence, New Mex  
Your host Rude Beateucus

To avoid undue introspection (uck  
Polsoe hot button greens  
Happy B'Day AK-47 (SO  
Focus on your daily activities

Rather than on your symptoms  
Internalize the octave  
Sonnet recoil'll land you elsewhere  
"Blink Area" (transit rapido

Tops heavy machinery  
"Can like a guy be a suffragette?"  
In this, biased innards  
Bobs the big reality (world

Now Post All Star Break Shump  
American Troops Space Station Mir  
The airwall clear brows  
Probable callee didna talk

Close caption road rage  
Wrongful attire I'm a unit  
Years of Blink Rehab  
Tops of the fondle (frontiers

**Lavender Ink**  
5568 Woodlawn Place  
New Orleans, LA 70124  
Lavink99@aol.com  
<http://members.aol.com/Lavink99>

## DAY TWENTY-TWO

I'm in a bar on Dorchester Ave. called the Harp and Bard. At the moment there is no music or poets around. I'm writing this on a paper napkin while waiting for my "turkey on whole wheat" to arrive.

I've written on napkins before. Many of the poems in *Napkin Apologies* were written by Duck Martian on napkins or at least I think they were. My pseudonyms and I have written on many things: bags, desktops, chalkboards, socks, and skin. A long time ago, I met a poet who was committed to writing the thoughts he had about his poems while he read them on his arms. His name was the initial P. I met P through a friend who had decided to drive across the country and stoke political awareness in a sleepy populace. It was the Eighties, Reagan was in, and my friend was totally sick of that guy. My friend was an advocate of peace and love. He met P in Nashville and brought him back to Binghamton, which was to be the starting point of the trip. I was living with my kids at the time in a dingy apartment on Clark Street and working for chump change at BOCES. I was not in very good humor during this time due to many factors. My friend thought P's work and manner might lighten my mood.

### *Napkin Two*

I don't remember much about P's work but his

manner was engaging. Because I was on home turf I suggested that he read a poem to warm up and I would follow-up with one of my own. Then we would get into a round robin. P, who had remained silent during our initial greeting, gave but a slight nod of his head to indicate his agreement with this offer. As he reached into his **satchel** for his poems, it dawned on me that he looked a little like Nathaniel Hawthorne, except for the fact that his long, dirty blond hair was much thinner than Nathaniel's and appeared ready to fly off his head at wind's notice. With his poems in hand he went into a flailing arm routine reminiscent of Ed Norton preparing to sign something for Ralph Kramden. When his arms settled down, he extended his left arm out in front of his face as far as it would go with his elbow bent at a 30 degree angle, and his left palm opened wide. The position of the left palm reminded me of a teleprompter, and it was on this palm that he placed his first poem. After clearing his throat, he announced that his first poem, "Bad Weather," had 44 sections to it. It took P two and a half uninterrupted hours to read the thing. He could have finished it in a short period of time, if he hadn't stopped to write comments on his arm about his work while in the process of reading it. Some of his comments were quite lengthy, and by the time he finished the poem, he had pretty much tattooed his left arm with self-criticisms and insights. He grew edgy when I protested that reading his insights about his work could not be considered part of his turn. It



was my turn and I hit him with a **haiku**.

### *Napkin Three*

I've wasted a lot of time during the last fifty years (Here comes the Lunch!), and I hope doodling on napkins about my life in a bar on an old Irish street in Boston gives some indication of this fact. Wasting time is an art and a mindset. The world is just too hectic and busy for me. It's too full of projects and achievements, and we humans maintain a façade of knowing where we're going. I get lost in the façade at times. My old friend, e.e. cummings, once said something to the effect of – “let the *be-ers* be and doers do.” I think we need a bunch more be-ers in our neighborhoods and in the marketplace. I like the fact that be-ers turns into beers, minus the hyphen. It's time to have a cold one.

### *Napkin Four*

For some reason, I'm a little short on breath at the moment. This happens to me sometimes and started around the age of 12. I became a conscious human being one night during my 12th year, and it took my breath away. Being conscious was not that easy. Suddenly, I didn't know who or what I was or where I was going. Fear slipped into the arena of thought and I began to think something was wrong with me. “What's wrong with me?” I pondered in the darkness of my room. I knew I had

been dropped on my head (Boink!) when I was six months old. But that was a long time ago.

Mom read my newfound fear like a psychic and took me to see **Dr. Hawley**. Dr.Hawley was our family doctor and he was both a very old man and one of great, practical wisdom. He knew, for instance, that you couldn't catch a cold from stepping in puddles or getting your feet wet in other manners. When my Aunt asked him about that, he reminded her of the shower she took each morning. When the practical wisdom didn't work, he handed his patients little white envelopes filled with colorful pills.

I liked Dr. Hawley but he didn't have much to say about my first taste of free-floating anxiety. He listened to my heart and made me stick my tongue out. He looked into my ears and even hit my knee with a rubber mallet. Because I was stiff as a board during the examination, he gave my Mom an envelope filled with green pills and told me I would turn into a **frog**, if I ate too many of them. At the time, I feared metamorphosis and decorated his carpet with Tricks are for kids. The visit was over.

### *Napkin Five*

Death is what is wrong with us. Without death, we're pretty healthy. I think my Dad felt that there was something wrong with him. “Richard,” he said to me one day. “I never thought I'd make it to 30 years old. When I reached thirty, I never thought I'd make fifty. After fifty, I never thought of

making it or not making it again.” He had survived World War 2, a sad marriage and divorce, estrangement from his own brothers, job frustration, bankruptcy, and a ton of alcohol and smoke. After fifty, he accepted a finite immortality, played the horses, went fishing, and ran a little dive bar on the Southside of Binghamton with his second wife. The bar grew famous for his **left-handed drinking parties** before he died at 62. In his own way and on his own terms, he learned to let go. He became a *be-ER*. Thanks for the advice, Dad.

## NOTES

230. **many factors.** Well, for one, the wallpaper in the kids’ room looked like brain cells.

231. **satchel.** See poem.

### TITLE

Whether “faiths” or  
Not  
Are part of  
The religious experience

A satchel of rivers  
A satchel of river  
Poems

Stone steps  
The wisdom tree  
Shouting omnipresence  
Into a crowd

The number of interpretations  
Possible  
Meaning cowering in fear

Momentary wait  
Rereading the event  
Of words

Who’s guiding the unknown hand  
The sex of it

Deep in the bones

All those flowers

And kids

The upright walk

Attributed

To the clown of happiness

Splash some art

On it

Unfurl

The magic commandments

Consider the

Act of construction

The stapler

On the desk

Arrangement of scattered

Pens

And pencils

Postcards of

Encouragement

Surround you

Say nothing

Of the

Parenthesis

Romantic train

Whistles

In the distance

232. **haiku.** Bill Kemmett writes a mean haiku.  
He's the best in the Northeast.

Sunday Junkyard;

The Watchdog Yawns Steam

at the Falling Snow

(from *Flesh of a New Moon*, see Igneus Book List  
Appendix Y)

233. **Dr. Hawley.** See poem.

#### ON THE BORDER OF A CHILL

The snow piling up on my skin

reminds the man

trapped in the transfer

of mountains

into bones

of the handkerchief dropped

by a lover

on the night

an errand of bread and milk

turned into a fever.

The body is an old thing:

more clock than memory.

The illusion of moon and horizon

ticks in my fingers.

I know the age of gods and rocks.

I wear their skin.

Dark forms swirl in the blood.

The ceiling spins like a kaleidoscopic top.  
A snake coils around my spine.  
A voice turns white and falls  
into a bucket of wax.  
The body is a ritual:  
a candle of throats  
and things to do.  
I see the killer in the pair of pants  
and change into feathers.  
The bedpost points the gun and fires.  
The doctor will come  
and make the duck in my stomach  
speak in tongues.

The body is street corners and coincidence.  
It took years to learn  
to sleep like mountains  
and dream waterfalls  
of bone to climb.  
The body is its ancestors:  
snap and creak of tree  
wind and brittle leaf  
the sacred sound of paw  
are eggs on stone  
as children cry.

**234. frog.** Early on in my life the transcendent power of Being was largely cast in imaginative and fearful **personas**.

**235. bar.** I started to go into bars around the age of

six. My dad was a whiskey salesman at that time and he took me with him to various bars on Saturday mornings. At each bar, I had a coke and a bag of peanuts and he had a shot and a beer. We both got the buzz on.

**236. Left-handed Drinking Party.** See Reflection.

#### A REFLECTION

Dad was a natural lefty, but the nuns made him write with his right hand because Jesus sat on the right-hand of the Father, not the left. The left was considered the Devil's side. Think about that in terms of American politics during the 20th century:

i.e.  
the great demon mother Russia  
of R. Reagan's America  
before the collapse of the big  
Bear.

Anyway dad's handwriting sucked – real illegible stuff, the kind of garbage script pharmacists read and decipher from doctors who secretly intend to doff patients via their chicken scrawl for potent pills for what ails them.

But of course there is no left in American politics today is there?

We've got the headache of Christian right-wing fundamentalists but not left-wing Christ fanatics.

Just a bunch of corporate Democrats and  
Republicans

yakking it up  
with the rich and the famous.

Now that word fundamentalist initiates a pause, doughnut? Think of what S. Rushdie went through for his book *Satanic Verses*. Serious hiding for his life etc, and just today, the thought popped into my head that *imagination always precedes knowledge*. And let's give credit to A. Einstein for his quote: **Imagination is more important than knowledge.**

(Am I losing Dad?)

I remember playing catch with him in front of  
our house.

He wore a left-handed mitt  
very orange

and autographed by Hank Bauer.)

Probably not. Let me reiterate that nuns pissed him off doing that to his writing hand (and here's quite a conjunction) and besides this whole memoir (if it is a memoir, which it ain't, because I've already decided it's an antimemoir) is an exercise in what coherence is - i.e., what makes words, ideas, genres, text, a life cohere - especially in this age.

But to lean back into Imagination (Blakean) (and this from Diane di Prima: "the only war is the war against the Imagination") precedes knowledge - then of course religion came first. And sticking to my own Christian past - the myth - the explanation of our condition came prior to a fuller understanding about the nature of our condition. A couple of things here. First this ditty ( not do-wah):

*The earth was created at 9 A.M. on October 23, 4000 BC*

This factoid comes to us from James Ussher, a respected scholar and prelate of the Anglican Church in Ireland and England (from *A Short History of Planet Earth: Mountains, Mammals, Fire, and Ice*. By J.D. MacDougall - a gift from my son on my 50th birthday) in the middle of the 17th Century. Mr. Ussher arrived at this date through a careful - i.e. literal study of biblical genealogies. Less than an instant of 300 years or so in geological time we now know/claim the earth is 4.5 billion years old.

My point (besides being  
off the point  
or failing to make one  
though I played point guard  
in high school which is kind of stretching the  
point  
or getting geometrical shivers about the nature  
of a point  
which in itself  
extends to

HURRICANES OF DISTRACTION  
(and goes like this)

He was sick of broken excuses  
inside fast envelopes

He worried to trips  
from point A to point B

how to get there  
Was there time

Should he or shouldn't he  
Maybe this or that

He never spoke in triangles  
to anyone

Darkness took care of the owl  
in his mouth

His arms managed to carry  
gift subscriptions  
of permanent press shirts  
on plastic hangers

He had fantasies  
of waking up

outside hurricanes  
of distraction)

Is: we make elaborate, meaningful, great stories from our powerful imaginations to explain our predicament because it often feels like a predicament that we're in - doughnut?

So things went wrong in the Garden and here we are lost in our labors. (From this morning's paper: 25% of the work-force feels really angry at work and this anger leads to problems with the

heart, intestinal tract, and the immune system.) A few *go postal* and shoot their coworkers - i.e. a tragic predicament - even though working on a 4.5 billion year old planet that accreted (bump and grind) its way into being is pretty wild and fantastic to consider from the bigger lens we're capable of looking through to establish where we are exactly.

(I had a second point but this  
is the dilemma  
involved with  
writing rambling  
spontaneous text -  
points get lost  
become confused  
disdain the platform  
of their textual rights  
when it's time  
for them to expound.)

Not to fret. Dad was still pissed off about what the nuns did to him, and on days this insult to his communication rights really annoyed him, he'd charged the patrons in his joint, *Out Our Way*, a quarter if he saw them picking up a drink with their right hands. The quarters went into Maxwell House Coffee cans and when they overflowed, he'd throw a *Left-handed Drinking Party* for his patrons at his campsite on a tiny lake in the northern hills of Pennsylvania. The parties usually got out of hand after some serious horseshoes and drinking causing his guest-patrons to turn on my old man for his dictatorial ways (keeping on the pressure during the party to drink now with only the left

hand) and the fact that he had the gall to wear orange work books and Bermuda shorts at the same time. Eventually, his old lady brought out her shotgun and fired once or twice into the air to announce that the party was over. Nobody insulted her man.

237. **duck.** See Appendix AA for Duck Martian's play, *Quack*.

238. **personas.** See Appendix BB for review of *Modulations*.

## APPENDIX AA

### Quack

A play by  
Duck Martian

*Quack has never been presented at any theater.*

Duck Martian . . . . .Everyman/Everywoman

Audience . . . . .Everyman/Everywoman

Repairmen . . . . .Everyman/Everywoman

Two women . . . . .Everyman/Everywoman

Stage Manager . . . . .Everyman/Everywoman

The play is in one act with three scenes and an epilogue

## ACT ONE

### SCENE I

Beginning of the third millennium. In an old, two-car garage.

Night.

Duck Martian, *wearing goggles and dangling a snorkel from one of his hands, kicks a gray, metal washtub (face-up) from the left side of the stage to the center. He has bright orange flippers on his feet and is wearing a short-sleeve madras shirt and cut-off jeans. He is singing a Beatles tune as he kicks the washtub toward the center of the stage. All around the garage is a mess of tools, tires, fenders, oilcans, carburetors, headlights, and empty Dom Perignon bottles. To the right of the stage, there is a big tinfoil submarine with large green antennae sticking out from the front of it. A soft electronic buzz emanates from the antennae. To the left and rear of stage, there is an aboveground swimming pool aquarium, filled with various plastic sea animals and waterfowl. A single but very bright light bulb hanging in the center of the stage illuminates the action.*

Duck Martian (*kicking the washtub and singing*): So you're going to a party, party. So you're going to a party, party. So you're going to a party, party. (*He stops singing and kicking the washtub. Turns to the audience. Pause. He shrugs his shoulders and resumes singing.*) They say it's your birthday. Well, then happy birthday to you. (*Resumes kicking the washtub and singing.*) So you're going to a party, party...

(*Repeats line until the washtub is under the light bulb. He bends down and flips the washtub face down, centers it under the light bulb with his flippers and steps on top of it, facing the audience. He tosses the snorkel over his head—toward the aquarium—and stares at the audience, moving his head from the left to the right. His left hand rests on top of his goggles like he is shielding his eyes from the sun. He stops surveying the audience and comes to full attention, military style. He starts counting.*) One Mississippi, two Mississippi, three Mississippi. (*Stops. Then in staccato manner*)

Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do More  
Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do More  
Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do More  
Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do More  
Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do More  
Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do More  
Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do More  
Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do More  
Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do More



*(He stops and leans forward. He cups right ear with his right hand. A member of the audience stands up with a sign that reads: Not enough. Audience member holds sign above his/her head and turns with it so all members of the audience can read what it says. Audience member sits down and shouts back at the Duck what the sign says.)*

Audience Member *(with disdain):*

Not enough Not enough Not enough Not enough  
Not enough Not enough Not enough Not enough  
Not enough Not enough Not enough Not enough  
Not enough Not enough Not enough Not enough  
Not enough Not enough Not enough Not enough

Duck Martian *(loudly like a drill sergeant with right ear cupped and jumping up and down on the washtub):*

Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do More  
Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do More  
Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do More  
Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do More  
Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do More

*(Duck continues jumping up and down on washtub after responding. Audience member stands back up with the sign held above his/her head and races to the front of the theater and faces audience. Moving from side to side of theater while shaking the sign (with vigor) above his/her head, he/she encourages the entire*

*audience to join in on the response, which they do.)*

Entire Audience *(with disdain):*

Not enough Not enough Not enough Not enough  
Not enough Not enough Not enough Not enough  
Not enough Not enough Not enough Not enough  
Not enough Not enough Not enough Not enough  
Not enough Not enough Not enough Not enough

*(Audience member lowers sign and sits down on the floor, facing audience. Audience stops. Duck Martian moves back to attention. He stretches his goggles toward the audience and lets them snap back on his face. He groans loudly. Pause.)*

Duck Martian *(reassumes staccato manner):*

Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do More  
Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do More  
Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do More  
Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do More  
Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do More  
Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do More  
Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do More  
Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do More  
Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do More

*(He stops and leans forward. He cups left ear with his left hand. Audience member jumps up off the floor with sign raised above his/her head and the entire audience*

*immediately responds.)*

*Entire Audience (with exaggerated disdain):*

Not enough Not enough Not enough Not enough  
Not enough Not enough Not enough Not enough  
Not enough Not enough Not enough Not enough  
Not enough Not enough Not enough Not enough  
Not enough Not enough Not enough Not enough  
Not enough Not enough Not enough Not enough  
Not enough Not enough Not enough Not enough  
Not enough Not enough Not enough Not enough  
Not enough Not enough Not enough Not enough  
Not enough Not enough Not enough Not enough

*(Audience member flings sign on stage and heads back toward seat. Audience stops chanting. Flapping his arms wildly, Duck hops up and down on the washtub. Deus ex machina, stage manager enters from left side of the stage riding a John Deere lawn tractor and drives over to the sign tossed on the stage by the audience member. After retrieving it, he drives to the front of the stage, shuts down and gets off the tractor. With the sign held high above his head, he addresses the audience, explaining to them that each time Duck says his line (staccato manner), they should immediately respond with the line on the sign (with exaggerated disdain). He asks the audience members to nod their heads if they understand. They nod in unison. Continuing to flap his arms wildly and hopping up and down on the washtub, Duck starts his chant. With occasional comments from the stage manager (from encouraging*

*words to calling the audience wimps), Duck and the audience go back and forth with their lines until a strong rhythmic connection is established between them. Then the light goes out over Duck's head. Silence. Curtain.)*

## SCENE II

Same place.

Later that same night.

*As the curtain opens, the sound of waves crashing on a shoreline fills the theater. Duck Martian is on his belly to the left side of the stage. He's still wearing goggles, bright orange flippers, madras shirt, and cut-off jeans. This time the snorkel is in his mouth. On the right side of the stage, Duck's submarine is flipped upside down. A white flag flies from it. The green antennae are mute, though visible. The swimming pool aquarium remains to the left and rear of the stage, filled with the various plastic sea animals and waterfowl. Once the curtain is fully open, Duck begins to swim across the stage toward the washtub at the center of the stage with the single bright light bulb above it. This takes some time. When he is halfway there, he spits out the snorkel and begins to sing.*

Duck Martian (*head turned toward audience, singing*): Blow the man down, Dooley, blow the man down. Give me some time to blow the man down. (*He keeps singing the same lines until he reaches the washtub. Once there, he stops singing, gets up and stands on the washtub, shaking off imagined water like a dog. He stares at the audience, moving his head from the left to the right, his left hand resting on top of his goggles like he is shielding his eyes from the sun. He stops surveying the audience and comes to full attention, military style. Shakes out of it into a casual*

*stance and starts counting.) One Mississippi, two Mississippi, three Mississippi. (Stops. Pause. In a slow, sexy and relaxed tone.)*

Yo, I can't help you.  
Yo, I can't help you.  
Yo, I can't help you.  
Yo, I can't help you.  
Yo, I can't help you.  
Yo, I can't help you.  
Yo, I can't help you.  
Yo, I can't help you.  
Yo, I can't help you.  
Yo, I can't help you.

*(He stops and leans forward. He cups right ear with his right hand. A member of the audience stands up with a sign that reads: **Gotta help us.** Audience member holds sign above his/her head and turns with it so all members of the audience can read what it says. Audience member sits down and shouts back at the Duck what the sign says.)*

Audience Member (*imploringly*):

Gotta help us.  
Gotta help us.  
Gotta help us.  
Gotta help us.  
Gotta help us.

Duck Martian (*somnolently, swaying back and forth*

*on washtub):*

Yo, I can't help you.  
Yo, I can't help you.  
Yo, I can't help you.  
Yo, I can't help you.  
Yo, I can't help you.

*(Duck continues swaying back and forth on washtub after responding. Audience member stands back up with sign held above his/her head and races to the front of the theater. Moving from side to side while shaking the sign (with panic) above his/her head, he/she urges the entire audience to join in on the response, which they do.)*

Entire Audience *(imploringly)*:

Gotta help us.  
Gotta help us.  
Gotta help us.  
Gotta help us.  
Gotta help us.

*(Audience member lowers sign and sits down on the floor, facing audience. Audience stops. Duck Martian moves back to a casual stance. He stretches his goggles toward the audience and lets them snap back on his face. He groans loudly. Pause.)*

Duck Martian *(slow, sexy and relaxed)*:

Yo, I can't help you.  
Yo, I can't help you.  
Yo, I can't help you.  
Yo, I can't help you.  
Yo, I can't help you.  
Yo, I can't help you.  
Yo, I can't help you.  
Yo, I can't help you.  
Yo, I can't help you.  
Yo, I can't help you.

*(He stops and leans forward. He cups left ear with his left hand. Audience member jumps up off the floor with the sign raised above his/her head and the entire audience responds.)*

Entire Audience *(imploringly)*:

Gotta help us.  
Gotta help us.  
Gotta help us.  
Gotta help us.  
Gotta help us.  
Gotta help us.  
Gotta help us.  
Gotta help us.  
Gotta help us.  
Gotta help us.

*(Audience member flings sign on stage and heads back toward seat. Flapping his arms laconically, Duck hops up and down on the washtub. Deus ex machina, stage*

### SCENE III

*manager enters from left side of the stage riding a Ginger scooter and scoots over to the sign tossed on the stage by the audience member. After retrieving it, he scoots to the front of the stage, shuts down and hops off the scooter, letting it crash to the floor. With the sign held high above his head, he addresses the audience, explaining to them that each time Duck says his line (slow, sexy, relaxed), they should immediately respond with the line on the sign (imploringly). He asks the audience members to nod their heads if they understand. They nod in unison. Continuing to flap his arms laconically and hopping up and down on the washtub, Duck starts his chant. With occasional comments from the stage manager (from encouraging words to calling the audience wimps), Duck and the audience go back and forth with their lines until a strong rhythmic connection is established between them. Then the light goes out over Duck's head. Silence. Curtain.)*

Same place.

Early morning.

*As the curtain opens, a Zydeco beat fills the theater. Duck Martian is on his knees in the washtub at the center of the stage under a single bright light bulb. The tub is surrounded by little rubber ducks. He's wearing his goggles and the snorkel is in his mouth. Instead of a madras shirt, an old-fashioned washboard covers his bare chest. He has two large spoons in his hands. The submarine is now on the left side of the stage - right side up - with two repairmen working on it in pantomime. A soft electronic buzz emanates from the antennae. The swimming pool aquarium is to the right and rear of the stage, filled with the various plastic sea animals and waterfowl.*

*Duck Martian (spits out the snorkel, rubs the spoons up and down the washboard, and sings): This is the way we wash our clothes, wash our clothes, wash our clothes ... This is the way we wash our clothes so early in the morning. (He stops singing and stands up in the tub, facing the audience. The music stops. He stares at the audience, moving his head from the left to the right, his left hand resting on top of his goggles like he is shielding his eyes from the sun. He stops surveying the audience and comes to full attention, military style. Shakes out of it and falls to his knees. He starts counting.) One Mississippi, two Mississippi, three Mississippi. (Stops. Assumes a histrionic tone.*

*Frantically pulls at hair.)*

I'm absolutely worthless.  
I'm absolutely worthless.  
I'm absolutely worthless.  
I'm absolutely worthless.  
I'm absolutely worthless.  
I'm absolutely worthless.  
I'm absolutely worthless.  
I'm absolutely worthless.  
I'm absolutely worthless.  
I'm absolutely worthless.

*(He stops and leans forward. He cups right ear with his right hand. A member of the audience stands up with a sign that reads: Yes, you are. Audience member holds sign above his/her head and turns with it so all members of the audience can read what it says. Audience member sits down and shouts back at the Duck what the sign says.)*

Audience Member *(haughtily)*:

Yes, you are.  
Yes, you are.  
Yes, you are.  
Yes, you are.  
Yes, you are.

Duck Martian *(on knees, pulling at hair, histrionically)*:

I'm absolutely worthless.  
I'm absolutely worthless.  
I'm absolutely worthless.  
I'm absolutely worthless.  
I'm absolutely worthless.

*(Duck remains on knees, pulling at his hair, after responding. Audience member stands back up with the sign held above his/her head and races to the front of the theater. Moving from side to side while shaking the sign (with attitude) above his/her head, he/she entreats the entire audience to join in on the response, which they do.)*

Entire Audience *(haughtily)*:

Yes, you are.  
Yes, you are.  
Yes, you are.  
Yes, you are.  
Yes, you are.

*(Audience member lowers sign and sits down on the floor. Audience stops. Duck Martian stands back up, then flops back down on his knees. He stretches his goggles toward the audience and lets them snap back on his face. He groans loudly. Pause.)*

Duck Martian *(resignedly)*:

I'm absolutely worthless.  
I'm absolutely worthless.

I'm absolutely worthless.  
I'm absolutely worthless.  
I'm absolutely worthless.  
I'm absolutely worthless.  
I'm absolutely worthless.  
I'm absolutely worthless.  
I'm absolutely worthless.  
I'm absolutely worthless.

*(He stops and leans forward. He cups left ear with his left hand. Audience member jumps up off the floor with sign raised above his/her head and the entire audience immediately responds.)*

Entire Audience *(scoldingly)*:

Yes, you are.  
Yes, you are.  
Yes, you are.  
Yes, you are.  
Yes, you are.  
Yes, you are.  
Yes, you are.  
Yes, you are.  
Yes, you are.  
Yes, you are.

*(Audience member flings sign on stage and heads back toward seat. Preening his arms, Duck remains on his knees in the washtub. Deus ex machina, stage manager enters from left side of the stage on a pogo stick and hops over to the sign tossed on the stage by the audience*

*member. After retrieving it, he hops to the front of the stage and hops off the pogo stick, letting it crash to the floor. With the sign held high above his head, he addresses the audience, explaining to them that each time Duck says his line (resignedly), they should immediately respond with the line on the sign (scoldingly). He asks the audience members to nod their heads if they understand. They nod in unison. Continuing to preen his arms while on his knees in the washtub, Duck starts his chant. With occasional comments from the stage manager (from encouraging words to calling the audience wimps), Duck and the audience go back and forth with their lines until a strong rhythmic connection is established between them. Then the light goes out over Duck's head. Silence. Curtain.)*

## EPILOGUE

Same place.

Around 8:00 AM.

*As the curtain opens, the Beatles tune - Yellow Submarine - fills the theater. The tinfoil submarine (bow facing audience) is at center stage with the washtub in front of it. A loud electronic buzz emanates from the antennae. The light bulb is out. Natural light fills the garage. The hatch on the submarine is open. The swimming pool aquarium remains to the right and rear of the stage, filled with the various plastic sea animals and waterfowl. Two women in bathing suits with orange flippers on their feet sit by it in beach chairs, drinking champagne from crystal flutes. Periodically during the epilogue, they dip large bubble wands into the pool and blow bubbles into the air. Duck enters from stage right without goggles or snorkel. He's dressed in an expensive gray business suit. The Wall Street Journal is tucked under his arm. Bright orange flippers remain on his feet. Duck ignores the audience and climbs into the open hatch. Once in a comfortable sitting position, he opens up the paper, blocking the audience from his view. Music stops. He starts to count.*

Duck Martian (*from behind the newspaper*): One Mississippi, two Mississippi, three Mississippi. (*Stops. Pause. Peeks over newspaper. Pause. Ducks back behind the paper. Resumes cheerily*)

It doesn't really matter.  
It doesn't really matter.  
It doesn't really matter.  
It doesn't really matter.  
It doesn't really matter.  
It doesn't really matter.  
It doesn't really matter.  
It doesn't really matter.  
It doesn't really matter.  
It doesn't really matter.

*(He stops again and peeks over the top of the newspaper. Pause. A member of the audience stands up with a sign that reads: **You lying bastard.** Audience member holds sign above his/her head and turns with it so all members of audience can read what it says. Audience member sits down and entire audience immediately shouts back at the Duck what the sign says.)*

Entire Audience (*happily*):

You lying bastard.  
You lying bastard.  
You lying bastard.  
You lying bastard.  
You lying bastard.  
You lying bastard.  
You lying bastard.  
You lying bastard.  
You lying bastard.  
You lying bastard.



*(Duck flings the newspaper into the air, waves to the audience and disappears into the submarine, lowering the hatch. As the curtain closes slowly, stage manager announces over the public address system that the audience should continue (happily) to say their final line until the curtain closes completely. Yellow Submarine filters through the PA after the announcement. Audience continues to respond (You lying bastard) until the curtain is completely closed. Lights come on in the theater. Audience stops chanting. The sound of ducks quacking fills the theater as the audience exits.)*

martyred much earlier.

It is believed that while St. John was in exile on the island of Patmos he heard "a great voice, as of a trumpet" and was inspired to write the *Book of Revelation*. John was the apostle who was given the responsibility of caring for Mary, the mother of Jesus (John 19: 26-27). The love of Jesus for John is recorded in John 21: 20-25. While the poetry does not establish a connection with this history, as a reader, I felt that connection.

Di Biasio's small book of poetry transported me to a spiritual level, and yet, at the same time, I felt grounded. I felt that my feet were firmly planted on the earth, and that I appreciated all the nature of this earth.

Self-reflection is encouraged by this work. Di Biasio closes by focusing on the importance of seeing, of observing carefully. As quoted earlier, Di Biasio reflects upon seeing the river, "Does the patience/of your bends/still persuade me?" Each reader may answer for herself.

As you can see, Di Biasio has drawn me into a circle where all are free to reflect on the relation of self to nature and to spirit.

⇒⇒ Loretta McNaughton

*Loretta McNaughton teaches writing at Clarion University of Pennsylvania. She has also taught in nursing homes. She writes poetry for herself.*



## ARE WE HAVING FUN YET?

### POETRY

Richard Martin, *Modulations, Paradise: Asylum Arts, 1998. 112 pages. Paper. \$12.00*

Richard Martin's *Modulations* gives clues to identify the spirit of poetry. With allusions to *The Catcher in the Rye*, *Catulo*, *Song of Myself*, *Patterson*, and *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, Martin creates personae which vacillates between adolescent and wise in a refreshing way. Curiosity seems to be Martin's relief. Isn't this what we need? Absolute possession of knowledge has become a drag, as in "Into the Yellow Darkness," and paralytic as in "Plastic Flowers." It's as if Martin's impatience with progress (perhaps with the end of the millennium i.e. our perception of time) screams, I love you/hate you, can we get this over with!!

Martin illustrates the paradox of humans who are powerful in knowledge but still not in control of time in "Wake-up Call" and "Fluke of Insolvency." "Inside," a stirring poem of identity, admits that the persona's capacity is unknown. Whether it is limited is unknown. All that is known is that a capacity exists. This is fuel for one with imagination: time may be an enemy, but it is the only means of filling the capacity. If only the world would cooperate! As Martin puts it: "My eyes mingle with shut." This is incentive to utilize, if not capitalize on, time.

In "Elect Me" Martin studies the persona of the charismatic politician: "I have the skin and the votes to become/an American hero slash Legend." The setting – in the sun, or in a public restaurant – exposes the persona, and makes it by both divine and popular vote. The circumstances create the proud boldness, which is not arrogance, of the politician. This tone persists through *Modulations* via other less public characters.

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The teasing affront of the bold persona and the blaring, demanding world is evident throughout Martin's work, and the night the poet read his work at Michelle's Café – in Clarion, PA – was not different. The distance traveled by the poet was made up by the delight he found in reading to a small audience of small towners, most of whom had not read *Modulations*. Martin's bemusement and spontaneity were evocative as he turned to me in the audience, told me to buy myself some wine, and shoved into my hand fifteen dollars. (I had been requesting poems, and he seemed to be flattered that I was so familiar with his book.) The appreciative glee on his face as I suggested title after title was irreplaceable. The bold persona had found a true campaigner, paid nonetheless.

This playfulness pervades the book. At the start, "Listening to the Radio" can be read as a sentimental reminiscence of the good old days when the biggest worry was solving a quadratic equation while his Dad was drinking "Quarts of milk! . . . /reading WWII novels/under a thin light" with "Mom snoring/softly/on the couch/pink curlers/in her hair." But, the questions and interjections of this first poem imply boredom and its urge for escape. So, Martin has fun as he insists on doing a poem. It seems to be a quirk he has, a sickness which could have been spotted and treated in grade school. "Green Horns" tries to make sense of a pubescent moment. "Poets Addicted to Moths" commits a frenzied trip of idiom. Perhaps *Modulations* is Martin's therapy?

*Modulations*'s experiences use complex yet stereotypical images, as in "Elect Me." The women in "Rubeic," bold enough to change form at our commanding perspective, are held together by a repetitive syntax. This lets the reader compile the experience the way police use a shifting composite to identify a person; here, the search for the right person makes the fame fun—a fantasy which never disassembles, but which is only verbally available.

"Sadness and Competition," which tries to name all types of victims, succeeds in including much of society through naming, inferring that none of us who are aware of the pain can escape. Martin's title suggests that people strive to acknowledge that they have the most sadness, and that on another level people strive to escape it. The end of the poem offers the only sustenance: "Time."

"In This Corner" metaphorizes facing an opponent in the boxing ring and facing the morning after a drinking binge. The oppositional forces kick the persona around like a lucky sack, as if for the entertainment of something larger. The persona, new to the game, or new to the way it's played here, or simply disoriented in an old game, expresses confusion at the shots the hangover takes: "[B]elow the belt, ref/what's the matter – you blind/hey I had your mother last night!" The italicized exclamations of the persona coordinate with the narrative of the poem to expose the persona – victim, fighter, survivor. The poem ends with the persona still standing, wondering, "and what about the bell/the fucking bell!" Flagellation of view is Martin's muse.

⇒⇒ Lynda Bennett

*Lynda Bennett's poetry has appeared in College English, Knight Ashbury Literary Journal, in intimate conversation, in the sky, and in the dark.*

Some recent poetry by Richard Martin appears in this issue. Ed.



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## DAY TWENTY-THREE

I took a Valium tonight and waited for its effects to kick in before I started writing. It's about one o'clock now and besides a few passing cars, the crazy dog next door continues to bark at something. The dog's name is Bandito, half-shepherd and whatever. It's full of life. In warm weather, he jumps into his owner's swimming pool and chews the water. He loves a hose in the face from Eileen or me when we're working in the **garden**. In the winter, a snowball of good intention, right in the face, drives Bandito wild. He could be the reincarnation of the Greek philosopher, **Thales**, or just your basic dog.

I don't take Valium very often, and it's rare that I even have them. But my doctor maintains everyone could use one now and then, and there are even times in his life when he wished he had one in one of his pockets the size of a Vanilla wafer.

That's how my mother felt about tranquilizers. Every now and then during my high school years, she offered me a Librium. "Go ahead, take one," she said, extending an open palm towards me with two white pills in it.

"One for you and one for me," she said. "It will calm you down. That feels good."

I guess I've never been calm enough for the people around me (I might have mentioned this somewhere else in the memoir, but I'm not sure in the haze of the moment). During my early years, starting from the timeline of my header off of the

bassinet, I bumped my head on all kinds of stuff when the grip of high-energy states took over. You name it – chairs, walls, floors, toilet seats – and I put my head to it. In photos from that time, I'm the family member always wearing sunglasses. I remember one photo in particular (which I think I might get to in a minute), circa 1953, with me on a red trike, parked, and watching dad polish the fender of his 1949 Dodge. When my folks took me to the pediatrician, hoping for some explanation for my behavior, he'd calm them down with the notion that I simply had an Irish temper. Nothing wrong with that! And with some luck, it would fade or dim as I grew up, and I would learn that most people feel like ramming their heads into stuff but eventually decide to give it up and enter a tranquil (ized) state of mind. **Duh!**

### *JUST SAY NO! DRUG INTERLUDE/REPORT*

I took the Valium about an hour or so ago,  
And I feel its effects on my entire body.  
I'm not sure how it works exactly (**Not exactly**)  
But many of my brain cells have begun to punch  
out for the night.  
Some are just too sleepy to drive home from the  
Idea Factory  
And are nodding off to sleep in their synaptic cars  
In the virtual parking lot.  
Only a few are pestering for a nightcap at a local  
bar  
And all the pointless conversation available

Before slipping into sleep on top of the bar  
And the inevitable bum's rush out the door.

Hi, Nancy.

### Analysis of a Drug Detour

There are a couple of words that come to mind  
for what I'm doing now.

Personification is one,

But I think synecdoche also works.

Synecdoche is a figure of speech by which a more  
inclusive term

Is used for a less inclusive one

Or vice versa. (*The New American Heritage  
Dictionary*, p. 1305).

So I can say *head for cattle*

And *law for police*.

When my brain cells are portrayed as individual  
factory workers

in an Idea Factory,

they are, in fact, referring in a synecdochic way  
to my entire brain.

I may be off here.

But then again, I'm **drugged**.

It had to be a Sunday because that's when dad  
did this kind of work (made it back to the photo).  
My mom told me (as I grew into inquiry) that she  
made me wear shades in those days because my  
eyes were always black from banging my head off  
and into things. She feared the neighbors would  
accuse her of child abuse. That would have never  
happened. But Mom was always concerned about

the opinion of neighbors. More than once in my  
life, during my late-night teenage years, she  
opened the front door of our **canary** house and  
whistled to me that the neighbors had little interest  
in the opinions my friends and I spun off boozy  
tongues under full and partial moons. I'm too far  
away from those opinions and too sleepy to  
attempt to extricate them from the depths of  
**teenage wasteland**. I'm reasonably sure they had  
something to do with **freedom** (MEMOIR  
ALERT: DRUG FREE ALTERNATIVE DAY  
TWENTY-THREE MAY BE FOUND IN  
APPENDIX CC) and the fact that most adults  
around me bugged the shit out of me.

O the pull to wander here, or am I already  
wandering? And why not, the entire memoir has  
been pro tangent from the start. I'm a tangent.  
Tangential. Just say *Yes*, in a time of *No*. So though  
I think I realize my task is to somehow hook up  
and/or reconnect what I'm writing now back to my  
claim that I've never been calm enough for people,  
I prefer to record what I remember about Dad and  
his car and me and my sunglasses. My preference  
for this has to do with the missed opportunity for  
wealth his Sunday morning activity (polishing his  
car) embodied. *Blame my blasted wandering on the  
drug*. It says right here on the side of this here *vial*:  
"May cause drowsiness. Alcohol intensifies effect.  
Use care when operating machines." Didn't my  
friend, WCW, consider a poem a machine? And  
don't I consider language to be one? Watch out  
now, I'm a crane of thoughts, memories, feelings,

and words. Toot-toot. The work whistle just went off. Bandito continues to bark. They call me yellow- mellow. Quite rightly.

Dad was religious about polishing his car on Sunday and basically replaced going to church with this exercise. Sure, it was a sin, but I'm not sure he cared. Of course, the neighborhood crawled with those making their way to Mass at St. Patrick's Church, which was about five blocks away from our apartment on Chestnut Street in Binghamton.

One morning for some unknown reason (kindness), he decided to offer an old woman a ride to church after a brief hello and good morning to her. I'm not sure if I was swept off my red trike and made to accompany dad and the old lady on their maiden voyage to St. Patrick's, but I remember being with them in that car many times after that. It became a ritual and the old lady became our Aunt Liz.

Besides being old, Aunt Liz was large and odd. Even now (under the influence), I can conjure up the swelling around her ankles and the burdensome clothes she wore on even hot days – black wool coat, scarf, and black hat rimmed with artificial red roses – from an insouciant memory. Aunt Liz always attended the 8:15 Mass, and this induced my whole family to attend that one. Aunt Liz was partial to Monsignor Curtains' method of offering Mass. Even after he entered his years of confusion (too long at the Offertory and you can't stop a Mass once you reach the Offertory) and took the 8:15 right into the 9:30 Mass, she never

abandoned him. So we didn't either. Besides, everyone knew he was a saint, and they got to do whatever they pleased.

It didn't take long to start doing other things with Aunt Liz besides going to Mass with her. Soon after the initial sojourn in the Dodge, we started having dinner with her at her place on Tuesday nights. She lived a few blocks from us, next to Recreation Park, in a second floor apartment. Sensitive to smells (places like barns bothered me, and even at my senior prom when my beautiful date suggested that we visit her Dad's barn around three o'clock in the morning after a tiring night of prom songs (*Cherish, Light My Fire*), I asked her what for. Later in the summer when I told her I was entering the **seminary**, she kicked me in the right shin, really hard.), Liz's abode was a hothouse of old lady smells and odors. The overall impression on my olfactory nerves registered sour sheets, trash, animals, ideas – the whole enchilada of souring stuff. Give some credit to the Tuesday night meal for my nose misery, which never changed from week to week and consisted of boiled ham, peas, and lumpy potatoes, without dessert. The potatoes were the worst. The lumps in them were as hard as BBs and certainly could have served as spare or alternative ammo to the kind dad used when he shot at the asses of dogs messing around with our garbage cans.

Of course, Aunt Liz turned out to be a rich old coot and with her developed fondness for my dad and his young family, left us with some prime real

estate on the north side of town. In fact, she told him on her death bed that we would never have to worry about money or financial security again. But it never happened. Lawyers on her side of the family proved in court that Aunt Liz had been of feeble mind when she changed her will and wrote us into it. The thorn in the lion's paw defense held no weight with the moneyed classes. Dad and his family were out. The rides to church, the boiled ham and lumpy potatoes, didn't mean a thing.

I'm zonked. The paragraphs from this *Day* drift in front of me like smoke from a campfire of wraiths. Half of the vowels and consonants are snoring. Most of the syllables have begun to dream. Even the words refuse to toss and turn. Like all days, this *Day* is history. Bark. Bark. Woof. Woof.

Shut the fuck up, Bandito!

## NOTES

**239. Thales.** Presocratic philosopher. Supposedly fell into a well while engaged in philosophical thought about the fundamental nature of the world. After the plunge, Thales claimed the world was fundamentally made of water.

**240. Duh!** Single syllable expression used to convey the complete obviousness of any situation. Usually delivered with scorn and/or boredom in the voice to confirm the stupidity of others. Beloved by teenagers and considered the best way to communicate and converse with parents. Sometimes *Duh!* is preceded by the adjectives *heavy* and/or *wicked*.

**241. Not Exactly.** Only reference to rental car commercials.

**242. Hi, Nancy.** Only reference to Republicans.

**243. drugged.** See poem.

## INTO THE YELLOW DARKNESS

I need to be drugged and running a marathon

I love our stories of pumpkins  
and ladders to the moon

It's history after all  
and the reviews of bloodshed

must cease

This is the way of consciousness  
not Tao  
though I love it like a vanilla  
popsicle

Spin-offs and spin-cycles  
it still feels good to stretch out  
on the bed  
take a deep breath  
and not hurt the eyes  
I am falling apart and building something  
out of that

The beach is down the street  
down the road  
across from over there

And the convict loose in the neighborhood  
is called Houdini  
by the secretary who worries  
about computer screen lights

Remember the radon scare  
How a shower equaled a pack of cigarettes

Now schools don't open on time  
because of asbestos  
and a secret memo  
from one assistant superintendent to another  
claims lead is worse

There is no time to start a short story  
If there was

maybe a first line like:

“After the imagination festival, we drove back to  
Jerry’s  
and dropped acid.”

That’s how my senses opened  
By the third page  
I was on the street and staring  
at a lilac in full bloom  
The blood through my heart  
like a warm-up band

That’s what prose is all about

And there are plenty of dreams  
where the whales return  
and don't forget the humpback we saw  
30 yards before the bow  
it breached into our lives forever

Remember our hysterical laughter

Remember how perfect the ladder  
lay against the moon

Beanstalk and all in our heads  
we climbed

out of time  
out of space  
out of anything to say  
We went up and up  
into the yellow darkness

244. **canary.** For most of my K-12 years, I lived in a house painted bright yellow.

245. **teenage wasteland.** Only reference to the *Who*.

246. **freedom.** Providing options to the reader – like I just did.

247. **seminary.** I entered Wadhams Hall Seminary in Ogdensburg, New York, in September 1967. I fell in with a **bad** crowd and left the seminary in June 1968. I think that I may write about this experience sometime in the future so now's not the time to get into it. Interestingly enough, Wadhams Hall has kept its eye on me for the last 33 years. No matter where I move to in the United States, they know where I am and send me fund-raising requests and updates to their program. They're into **omniscience**.

248. **like I just did.** A phrase uttered by Toots of *Toots and the Maytals* after a concert in New Orleans in the late eighties I attended with John Miller, Susan Prezzano, Elizabeth Thomas, and Joel Dailey. Toots said something like this at the

conclusion of the show: "I said I would give you a good concert, like I just did."

249. 33. Age at which Christ died.

250. **omniscience.** See poem.

#### IN THE BATHROOM THIS MORNING

She's tapped into something else  
is what I thought  
reading her white words

The cat sprawled alongside the radiator  
wants heat

\*\*\*

Steam, make-believe steam  
rises from my coffee mug:  
Tony Packos' Cafe  
Est. 1932  
Toledo, Ohio

\*\*\*

Historicism finds the adjective *new*  
buried in the corner of a French mind

Is this a text  
or what we call culture



Are all minds linked then  
produced and made

\*\*\*

As a boy an all-seeing eye  
watched me (over me?)  
or us

A myth? told to me by mouths  
full of fear and warning

It was not the moon  
though cold light felt appropriate

\*\*\*

Mind-games, remember that old expression:  
“Don’t play mind-games with me.”

\*\*\*

But clouds and rain are not artifacts  
They can’t be dug up  
No committee of veracity to examine them

\*\*\*

Whistle-squawk, a flock of birds  
hops across the lawn

The thread of image yanked gently

or so it seems

\*\*\*

O narrative of life beautifully rare in the bright  
sun

**251. John Miller.** Author of the novels *Bug* and *Beef*. President of the Clarion, PA, Arts Council. Fantastic wit. Offered this advice to me when I asked him what we should do on a night we found ourselves in a questionable neighborhood in New Orleans: “Run like a screaming chicken into the night.” Friend.

**252. Susan Prezzano.** Archeologist and scholar. Famous parasite detective. Fantastic gardener. Lover of cats. Married to John Miller.

**253. Elizabeth Thomas.** American poet. Married to Joel Dailey. Mother of Hannah and Isabel (**Hungee-baby**).

**254. French mind.** Only reference to Michel Foucault.

**255. Hungee-baby.** Any shortstop worth his/her salt says this as the pitcher goes into his windup. Right, Isabel.

ALTERNATIVE DAY TWENTY-THREE

(options)



**256. options.** Part of the joy of writing my memoir has been to include some accidental stuff that has floated into my life. I found the checkmarks on the preceding page in one of the schools I work in. The moment I found them I knew I had found *Alternative Day Twenty-Three* of my life. I don't know who made the checkmarks, but I understand what they signify. **Signify** is a key concept. Because this is an interactive memoir, please take a guess about what the checkmarks mean and drop me an email. Hint: they are not someone's missing **to do list**. They have a place in my life as an **educator**.

**257. in.** "The prohibition against split infinitives and the rule against ending a sentence with a preposition are just folklore passed down from English teachers, but no good writer would obey them – they lead to clumsy prose and have no basis in the logic of English." Steven Pinker, the author of *The Language Instinct, How The Mind Works, and Words and Rules*. (*The Boston Globe Magazine*, January 23, 2000)

**258. Signify.** Now would be a good to time to launch into a full report on the history of semiotics and submit the entire memoir to the scrutiny of signifier and signified analysis as understood by Pierce, Husserl, de Saussure, and Derrida. See poem instead.

The woman  
in the bathtub  
is the woman  
in the bathtub.  
My love for her  
is not  
in these words.  
These words  
are not  
the woman  
in the bathtub  
calling me  
now  
to brush her hair

**259. to do list.** In addition to my Fan Pants idea, I have other potential moneymakers. How about a *Not To Do List*? Or what about a plastic Buddha with a tiny handle in the skull? *Portable Zen*.

**260. educator** I'm thinking of writing a book about my life as a teacher. It could start with my impulse to become a **gym teacher** when I was in middle school and work its way to my present position in the field.

261. gym teacher. See poem.

GREENHORNS

Mom makes sandwiches with butter  
and without.

I take the ones without.

The President is shot  
and a student runs down the hall  
smiling and screaming:  
“The President’s been shot!”  
“Aren’t you going to watch it  
on TV?”  
It’s on TV,” my sister says.

I bounce my basketball up the street.  
I’m thinking about the dance  
and Kathy’s tits.

Is it wrong?

They make us swim in the nude in gym class.  
They make fun of those  
who are afraid of the water.  
In the shower my balls shrivel into atoms.

They call us greenhorns  
and knock the books from our arms.  
A punk picks me up and throws me  
headfirst into a snowbank.

When the girl next to me  
gets her period  
during English class  
the teacher locks us in the room  
and calls us animals  
through a small window in the door.

Dad drives a Bonneville.  
The country mourns.

I want to be a gym teacher.

(from *Modulations*, pp. 85-86)

## DAY TWENTY-FOUR

### DOOMSDAY REPRIEVE

By Duck Martian

(A new work by the author of *Napkin Apologies*)

#### MOLECULES

The elephant stomps in  
demanding  
my saxophone.

The house is brilliant  
in the dream  
and the white flakes  
outside are bombs.

If my brain slips  
I will fall through a sidewalk  
of homemade chocolate.

Hello China!  
Renounce the speed of light!

Zip up the zippers  
and forge a silent e  
on the backs of clouds.

Quick

look around  
which objects smile  
which objects frown?

#### SEMANTIC ARTERIES

Words are too heavy.  
They've grown fat  
with centuries and mouths.

Any one of them  
could flatten us  
into a railroad penny

Go ahead  
lie down on their tracks  
and see what I mean.

#### SIMPLE FACT

On mornings  
sunlight broke

through  
the bedroom window  
like a gold cane

he levitated  
near the ceiling

This is no trick  
he assured his wife

and the few  
neighbors  
informed of his  
antics

by a telepathic cat

#### HEAVY WATER

For being mostly water  
we certainly have  
a lot of problems

#### VOICE

When I'm not twisted  
When I'm not the victim  
  
of empty rooms  
When I'm not afraid to kiss  
  
open your blouse  
like the past

When I have the time  
and oranges

of hysteria in place  
I will sing like a radio

tossed from a bridge  
about the days to come

#### SUMMER COUNSEL

Get out of your head  
there are flowers  
right now blooming  
in your back yard

#### NOVEMBER LAMENT

A fly the size of a cigar ash  
break dances  
on the window sill.

November arrives  
in cowboy boots  
and six shooters.

Bullets fly:  
a stampede of yellow leaves  
in the street.

People scream  
they see the sky  
in their conversations.

The sheriff of snow  
is in the air.  
No one dares to shoot  
the wind in the back.

#### CHICKEN DESCARTES

I brood therefore I am

#### LIKE

Like a game of Socrates  
Like a chessboard of missing pieces

Like a broken toy  
Like the time you and your friends  
stumbled onto a nude beach

Like what could be done  
Like streams of moonlight  
and shadows of love

Like the times they say  
are for rhetoric  
Like a man in his car  
with head out the window

Like mistaken dollar signs  
Like one-way detours

#### PROFIT SONNET

They're laughing it up in the Boardroom  
They're laughing it up in the Bored Room  
They're laughing it up in the Boardroom  
They're laughing it up in the Bored Room  
They're laughing it up in the Boardroom  
They're laughing it up in the Bored Room  
They're laughing it up in the Boardroom  
They're laughing it up in the Bored Room  
They're laughing it up in the Boardroom  
They're laughing it up in the Bored Room  
They're laughing it up in the Boardroom  
They're laughing it up in the Bored Room  
They're laughing it up in the Boardroom  
They're laughing it up in the Bored Room  
They're laughing it up in the Boardroom  
They're laughing it up in the Bored Room

#### DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF WALT WHITMAN

Yes, officer  
Kosmos is spelled with a K

#### DOOMSDAY REPRIEVE

The world is still here  
Get used to it

KINGDOM

There's a place  
in my brain  
without any fear

PASTRY

All the moments  
of your live  
pass into this moment

which passes, too  
donut?

TOSSED

Into the big  
beautiful breeze  
of the day

The mind  
like a worn hat  
hooks the hook  
called nothing

DUCK'S MANIFESTO  
(CONTINUED)

Part 3

I love you.

Part 4

I love myself.



262. **Martian.** See Appendix DD for Duck's letter to English Departments.

OPEN LETTER TO UNIVERSITY  
PRESIDENTS  
AND ENGLISH DEPARTMENT HEADS

Dear Sir Ladies:

Don't you think it's about time to replace your  
present university poet

with me or one of my friends?

Let me be blunt.

My mother used to smack me in the head  
anytime I failed to bring home fresh bread from  
the corner market.

Catch my drift.

Things are stale.

Poems are stale.

The time for imprinting behind the waddle of a  
master is over.

Let me be blunt.

As a duck I understand the innate attraction in  
falling in line behind a recognized waddle

but Holy Quack

this must be resisted when it comes to writing poems.

By hiring me

or one of my watery friends

I guarantee this will not happen

because I vow

to chase anyone looking for a way

or a handle

to write an acceptable poem

right down the halls of academia

and out into their own experience

of the world.

Some will say this is too harsh

or possibly

not be the money maker for the university

that the present system is.

Let me be blunt.

The Duck Is A Downsizer.

But here's the thing:

New Space and New Ways will be created.

At the very least

before the next overthrowing

there will be some fun and chaos

and unabashed partying

in faculty lounges and classrooms.

Think of it.

Fun-loving poets in your midst again.

What a concept.

And not a single one of them with anything to  
say about how to write a poem.

With Sincere Quacks,

Duck Martian

## DAY TWENTY-FIVE

I got a little paranoid about the government and my body today. The government jitters struck first. When I say government, I'm talking about the Federal government, the one established by our Founding Fathers, which in my time has become so powerful and large that paranoia for a guy like me isn't too much of a stretch. The thought that Uncle Sam could be watching us – you know, us American citizens – seems reasonable to me when I'm feeling a little paranoid.

I wasn't even working on my memoir when I felt this paranoia. I was on a break from it and comfortably sitting in a chair in my bedroom with my mind on holiday with the blackbirds in my backyard. Lots of stuff was popping in and out of mind. I thought of my new shoes – a pair of brown suede Ecco's with their comfort fibre-system – and how truly comfortable they were. I felt like some popcorn and a verse from Steven's poem "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" flittered through my noodle – I was of three minds, /Like a tree/In which there are three blackbirds. Then I wondered, if I had perhaps misspelled the word *Pantex*, which appears in Day Nineteen and plays a part in my unfinished novel, *Mound*.

Of course I had. When I flipped back through Day Nineteen (after the break), I found that I had incorrectly spelled the word *Pantex*. According to my method of representing the sounds of language by literal symbols, I had written *Pentex* instead of

*Pantex*. No big deal, a simple vowel off. Yet, because I knew so little about the Pantex Plant (I like to write about what I don't know in unfinished novels), I felt the orthographic minimum in my memoir had to be to spell the damn word correctly.

I went to the Net with orthodontist and orthopedics stuck like flies on flypaper to my orthographic inquiry. Once in **cyberland**, I typed my misspelling of *Pantex* into the search box. In an instant, I was *cyberbounced* into websites for werewolves and vampires. A vowel off and this is what I get! I thought. It was time to use my tiny brain and/or get downstairs and crank some **Zevon**. I choose the former and *nanoed* my synaptic playmates into recalling something about the lone star state. It has a panhandle for Christ sakes they cooed into my immediate awareness. It became obvious to me. *Pentex* had to be spelled *Pantex* because *Pantex* was a geographic word made from panhandle and Texas. *Pan!* I said, as in pan, **Pan**, panacea, Panama, panatela, pan-broil, pancake, panchax, **Panchen Lama**, panchromatic, panda, pandamus, **Pandarus**, Pandean pipes, pandect, pandemic, pandemonium, pander, **Pandora**, **pandowdy**, panegyric, panel, pan fish, pangenesis, Pan-Germanism, panhandle(1), panhandle(2).

Trust the tiny brain. I was right. For as soon as I entered *Pantex* into the search box, the *Net* *cybergramed* me to the Pantex Plant site. Before I could say *Jack Cyber*, I learned that the Pantex Plant was located on the high plains of the Texas

panhandle, 17 miles northeast of Amarillo and just north of US Highway 60 in Carson County. It is a big place, and as I mentioned in *Note 190 for Day Nineteen*, the *Pantex* Plant is the only nuclear weapons assembly and disassembly facility in America. I *cybercruised* the site for a few minutes and saw that there were opportunities to learn more about radiation at the plant, storage of weapons, employment opportunities, and a host of other things. Without realizing exactly how I did it, I *cyberscuttled* into a section about the handling of pits. **Pits** are the most dangerous things in the world because they contain **plutonium** and are the terrifying kernels of nuclear bombs.

**Paranoia struck deep / into my heart it did seep** when my eyes picked up three words in blue lettering at the bottom of the page on pits. The words were: *notice to users*. I *cybershook* my way down and clicked on it. Immediately a big fat warning *cyberblinded* my eyes. The warning said that visits to this site would/could be tracked and intercepted and that civil penalties and imprisonment etc. were possible for any individual *cyberinterested* in the site. The warning asked me to click onto it if I agreed with the potential risk and if I choose not to click on, I better get my ass out of there pronto.

I *cyberejected* from this site (with my ass) like **Snagglepuss** exiting stage left. Man, I thought as I *cyberstalled* back on the AOL home page, the government still blows my mind. Though I've never had too much trouble with it, I've never felt

warm and **fuzzy** towards it. Back in the seventies, I told an IRS agent to go to hell, which was not a great move on my part. But come on, I was living in a trailer with my first wife and my baby daughter and had managed to scrape together five or six grand from raking leaves and doing other odd jobs around Conesus Lake in Livonia, New York. The IRS agent was sitting in some federal building in Buffalo and told me over the phone that no one could live on that kind of dough. When I said: "I don't call what I'm doing living." He told me to watch my mouth and tone. I said, "Bite me," and hung up the phone.

Though IRS agents today are forced to go to user-friendly seminars, they didn't have to back then. For kicks, the jerk must have flagged me as a potential tax-evader because I got audited a couple of times in the early eighties. The word on the street was that Reagan had ordered more agents to look into American citizens who were making 10 grand or less. I resided in that crowd and with three audits in 5 years or so; I gave some credence to that information.

I *cyberpanted* over this memory while it dawned on me that I had possibly misspelled a word in *Day Fourteen – The Doughnut Chronicles*. The word was Intertrigo – the medical appellation for a sore ass. Before deciding on another *cybervoyage*, I quickly consulted my dictionary for the correct spelling but it did not appear. That's when the Merck Manual leaped into mind.

*The Merck Manual of Diagnosis & Therapy* has

been published continuously for the last one hundred years, a claim no other medical textbook (in English) can make. It's composed of 23 sections of various disorders of the human body: gastrointestinal, pulmonary, allergic, ear, nose and throat etc., along with sections on infectious diseases (bacterial, fungal, parasitic) and poisoning. I get the creeps just writing about it and the old Merck is not a recommended read for a recovering hypochondriac. But a misspelling is a misspelling and so as the Oz of my own misspellings, I typed the words Merck Manual into the search box, and *cyperpresto*, the contents page of the manual in all its glory appeared before my eyes.

I knew what I wanted and *cyperscooted* to the Dermatological Disorders section and clicked it into view. Armed with its own search box, I typed in Intertrigo and before I could shout *cyperBingo*, a subsection on Nutritional Disorders cyberflashed onto the screen and I started to read about the symptoms and signs of Pellagra. It turns out that Intertrigo (Oz correct) is one of the symptoms and one of the four kinds of cutaneous lesions associated with the disease. According to the Merck, Intertrigo is characterized by redness, maceration, abrasion and secondary infection. I started to Merck-out, and when I read about that in advanced stages of the disease (Pellagra) mental aberrations were possible, I knew it was time to *cyberfly* from the site. I had a sore ass, not a **vitamin deficiency**.

Back in real space, I wiped my sweaty palms off

on my pants and said a little prayer for all the human bodies on the planet, about six billion of them. Man, I prayed, we don't even know who we are or why we're here, but we know how to spy on and destroy each other and record in detail all that ails us. So much of this had been part of my milieu and undoubtedly part of the **mind's milieu** from the beginning of time. But it's only the **descent** side of our selves. Then I thought of sunlight and kisses and waterfalls and spring flowers and all kinds of rocks and babies squealing and ice cream sundaes and hitting three-pointers in crucial games and poems and then kisses again and cuddling in bed with a lover and pretty wild socks and great meals and fine wines and flashing insights and hope and children and reading great books and being a father and then kisses again and really long sentences connected by conjunctions and short term and long term memories and ending my unfinished memoir this way (not just because my fifty days are up because they are, but because there is no summary or big bang of closure to a life still in process) and to continue like an anti-hero past parenthetical rhythmic intrusions because I know the last line of my memoir – one that no one will have to wait too long to read - will read: *and so I began to feel better*.

And so I began to feel better.

## NOTES

263. **cyberland.** I've decided to make up some new virtual words on DAY TWENTY-FIVE. Shakespeare did and everybody seems to like him. As you've seen, I put all the new cyberwords in italics.

264. **Zevon.** Only reference to Warren Zevon.

265. **nanoed.** Invented verb. A nanosecond is one-billionth of a second. See poem.

### NANOSERMON

Crows on a treadmill  
of white pine

A delicious buzz in my head

Pink flowers  
of the rhododendron

(from *Modulations*, p.52)

266. **Pan.** *Some much pan* in the dictionary. This one stands for the god in Greek mythology who had a human torso and a goat's head, ears, and horns. God of the woods, fields, and flocks.

267. **Panchen Lama.** The other great lama of Tibet.

268. **Pandarus.** Leader of the Lycians, killed by Diomedes during the Iliad.

269. **Pandora.** Like Eve, a first woman who got a bad rap because of a theft. A woman as the cause of all (pan) of mankind's ills has been in the male psyche for quite some time but it changes (after a few drinks) in the song Margaritaville, by Jimmy Buffet. "Some people claim there's a woman to blame (Some people -Early Greeks & Early Judeo-Christians), but I think it's my own damn fault."

270. **pandowdy.** Yum. Baked sliced apples with sugar and spice and everything nice.

271. **Pits.** Here's where language and human behavior stun me. The word *pit* in Latin is *puteus*, meaning a pit or well. But it has come to mean so many other things: an abysmal or despairing condition, Hell, the central kernel of certain fruits, the airport code or Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (PIT), and these deadly things in nuclear bombs. Zip back up to Pandora. In the Greek head, she was laid on mankind because of Prometheus' theft of fire. Leap back to my story *Christian Soldier Academy* and my early fear training in conceiving Hell as a pit of fire. We trigger our bombs with pits of hell fire. Connect the dots from Prometheus to Pandora to our knowledge of matter and energy. And here's a bonus connection between paranoid and mad. Again to the Greeks. Paranoia comes

from the Greek *paranoos* (demented), where *para*, represents beyond and “*nous*” the mind or beyond mind. As a chronic psychosis, paranoia is characterized by delusions of persecution or grandeur, which are strenuously defended by the paranoiac with apparent logic and reason. MAD we say. During most of the Cold War, MAD or Mutually Shared Destruction, was the government’s nuclear policy. It was without a doubt beyond the mind and one of grandeur/persecution. It was a paranoid doctrine. I’d much prefer some spring water from a pit (well). Even if Thales fell into one, let’s have a drink together.

**272. plutonium.** A radiological poison specifically absorbed by the bone marrow with half-lives ranging from 20 minutes to 76 million years. The fissionable isotope PU239 is used as a reactor fuel and in nuclear bombs. The dictionary claims it was named after the planet Pluto because it was discovered shortly after Neptunium and Pluto is beyond the planet Neptune. However, in Roman mythology, Pluto is the god of the dead and the underworld and this seems like a better explanation to me.

**273. Paranoia struck deep into my heart it did seep.** Only past tense reference to Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young.

**274. Snagglepuss.** Cartoon feline that knew when

to scat from trouble by voicing theatrical stage directions before taking off.

**275. fuzzy.** See poem.

### FUZZY

There’s a nevus on my retina  
And a pickle in my pocket.  
I have the resources to make sense.

A nevus is a freckle or mole  
And my doctor drew a picture of it  
In his coloring book.

It’s not serious but there.  
The pickle is a gherkin.  
It came from a jar of gherkins

And was chosen over a blue rock  
As the *object d’art* of the day  
To place in one of my pockets.

Former winners include: a piece of cloth  
Starfish  
Photo-essay on the Rock of Gibraltar.

Once there was the super-continent Pangea.  
Its formation caused the Appalachians  
And Ural Mountains to come into being.

I’m a big part of that story.

Lost in the woods  
I'm up in a tree with a beacon

Of light pulsing in my forehead.  
It's a code – a precursor to satellite systems  
That can see anything.

You've been spotted in your bedroom  
With a tube of foot cream –  
By the fender of a red car eating popcorn again.

It's that easy; don't be paranoid.  
There are enough coins on the bureau  
For a couple of cold ones.

When the optician dilated my eyes  
Two drops fell into my mouth.  
When I asked about potential harm to my  
person

She said:  
“You're not required to open your mouth  
When you open your eyes wide.”

As for **proverbs**,  
Shinning black on the subway home  
Things seemed suddenly clear.

**276. vitamin deficiency.** Pellagra is the result of a vitamin deficiency. It occurs where maize (Indian corn) forms a major part of the diet. Cure: balanced diet and 300 to 1000 mg. of niacin a day.

**277. mind's milieu.** See Norman O. Brown's book *Life Against Death*. In it, we're all sick puppies because of the against – i.e. the Freudian war between the life instinct (Eros) and the death instinct (Thanatos). *Note 263* on pits is all Thanatos. The *against* is the resistance. The pain in our heads. There is where Buddha helps out Freud – i.e. give the *against* a good swat with an enlightenment stick and see what happens. Brown recommends something like this too.

**278. descent.** Back to WCW and his poem *The Descent*, which starts: The descent beckons/as the ascent beckoned. Once again, the mind's complicated play – task – mandate: the confusion of zipping (bouncing) between Point Zenith and Point Nadir. Brown in *Life Against Death* points out Swift's observation that scaling up to point Zenith can land you back at Point Nadir. Christ descended into Hell even though the kingdom of God was in him. Blake married Heaven and Hell. Joseph Campbell lays out the whole voyage between the ups and downs of awareness in his book, *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*. Essentially the voyage of mind consists of three stages: the departure, the initiation, and the return. It's a metamorphic journey and the oldest recorded account of the journey is found in the Sumerian myth of a descent into the nether world by the goddess Inanna (p. 105). In Campbell's words: “The ultimate adventure, when all the barriers and



ogres have been overcome, is commonly represented as a mystical marriage of the triumphant hero-soul with the Queen Goddess of the World.” (Campbell, 109). There’s a ton more. But I’ll stop with Suzuki’s small mind and big mind insight. Small mind is our everyday up and down mind – dialectical – ego-centered awareness. Big mind is the all embracing void. The journey is one of getting from small mind to big mind.

279. **proverbs.** I enjoy making them up and sending them out into the culture. My latest: *Stop the funk – get funky.*

## GRAFFITI INTERMISSION

## NOTES

**280 Graffiti Intermission.** This is end of my antimemoir. This is as far as I could get in 50 days of writing (February 26, 1999 – January 26, 2000). I'm sorry I couldn't make them consecutive days but trust me I didn't spend more than 50 days on my life's tale. And despite all the hoopla about the millennium, it's still the 20th century and that's what counts. The graffiti intermission page is for comments you feel inspired to make about my life through its first fifty years. I'm an intelligent man. Thank you for participating in my antimemoir. See poem.

### THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN USED CARS AND LANGUAGE

Seaweed  
and  
the new graffiti of waves  
splash over my feet  
Downtown  
the young maestro strums a yellow guitar  
and  
dreams of the V-8 engine  
The country moves like a hurricane into itself  
Cans of laughter  
and  
reels of mistakes later  
the history teacher takes off his shoes  
The rest is TV  
The way it talks about itself  
what it's up to during this period of gimmicks

and power  
On an ice floe my favorite etymologist straps  
three words  
a red scarf  
and  
a band-aid  
The content miser shaves in a froth of form  
*hallelujah*  
Vowels in the waiting room of the lung hospital  
appear ready to escape  
*histrionics*  
There's sunlight on my dancing hand  
*hallucinate*  
Deep in the alley poets decide on pick-up-sticks  
or  
the I Ching  
Give a listen to the bells and tolling clouds  
"Come on down and drive this baby,  
if you don't believe the flashing odometer!"  
In a series of blue don't cross out blue  
As far as new worlds...  
Close your eyes  
and  
count to ten  
Capture the flag  
Jump from roof to roof in your neighborhood  
Applaud the sounds spinning around dissolved  
objects  
Kiss the tree anyway

Epilogue: Obligatory Sex Scene.

Richard Martin's indelible *Boink* probes the Obvious as it plumbs the Past of a creative mind adrift in this American popped kulture. This unclassifiable genre-buster is hilarious in places, poignant in others. Reading, experiencing, memorizing *Boink* is the only antidote for the Future.

— Joel Dailey

Martin starts right in with the multidimensionality in *Boink*. "Chunks" of a novel, poems, and "wry comments" set in the 50th year of his life. And it is almost intuitively prophetic that the form is perfect for electronic and mainstream publication. There is the ongoing narrative, and the "Notes" which further fragment the day's inner process conjoining the entire process. His landscape is set in the practical and wanders off into the absurd, a nice trick. Stock full of philosophy street style, and classical references, ongoing comments on the poetic, and stand up comedy. Admit it, we've all been "boinked" a few times, so why not again?

— Peter Kidd

a Lavender Ink  
electronic edition.



**Richard Martin**