

POET'S CORNER

Spiritus Domini

(Excerpt from *Six Stone Water Jars*)

...And I am everyone
Who helps to spend that borrowed light
I am Mrs. Williamson
The rich, the worldly social arbiter
Giver of famous parties
With one unworldly rule she never broke
Learned in childhood from her Irish nurse
"Always give your alms in secret"
Followed faithfully all her life
Concealing gifts wherever possible
And when she died
Her own children learned for the first time
That she was educating five poor students
And no one knew how many before
And the obituary paid her final tribute to you
Saying simply
"The extent of her charities
Will never be known"

And I am Mr. Edwards too
The senior accountant
Who took the rap
For the mistake of one of his subordinates
To save the man his job:
He had a wife and eight children
It caused Edwards no end of trouble
Affected his career
Yet he never told a soul
Your light guided him
And sealed his lips

And Lucy
I sing for her also
Lucy's husband was an alcoholic
Who wronged her in grievous ways
Left her to support the children

Used her savings
Abused her, even beat her
Made the home a hell
And yet when he apologized because he needed help
She always forgave him
Her forgiveness seemed to come
From some bottomless well of wisdom

And Lee the knightly soldier
Embracing light as duty
And Lincoln wedded to it as to the right

And Wanda
Wanda's way was simply this—
To do her husband's thinking for him
But so unobtrusively
He thought he was the brain,
And so did his employer
And everyone was happy...

...I feel a secret wind upon my face
That blows across the world
Bending pliant grass
Skipping leaves, swelling extended sails
Blasting the unlatched door
Up-rooting a stubborn oak
See where it reaches
Whom it touches:
Even carbuncular clerks
Intent on bedding with the typist
Have felt its breath
And turned aside

I once knew a man
With up-raised arm about to smite
Stop suddenly
And drop his angry fist
Stricken by a sense of nascent guilt
This wind can penetrate all closures—
Bedroom, office, courthouse, pub—
It invades the deepest sleep
And fans up warning dreams
To change a course

Wherever it blows
It's push and pull—
Twin censors of the wrong and right—
Align man's deed to one direction
Within its pressuring breath
There dwells a line of flow,
There lives
The style of a mind's motion
— A personality
You

—George Constable

Whither Mankind?

Brilliant as the sun at high noon
Behind a massive thunderhead so dark
One cannot tell the time of day
Or east from west;
That clear is what the future now foretells.
A clarity in which the day is like the night;
The night is like a midnight tomb,
Enshrouded thick with layered folds of black.

From this opacity what light can shine?
What air can breath?
What hope can spring?
Shall we indulge pyretic pulses of the brain,
Frantically searching new ruts in which to wallow,
With uncontrolled elan of ancient mystics?

Shall we imagine to create a destiny,
And not inherit one we do not know,
Aspire with our enlightened friends
To push the future where it ought to go,
Elitely sure, in Solomonic vein,
And comic solemnity
We know the way?

Should sure enlightenment not come with
thought,
Shall we permit our mind to float
With the restrained exuberance of a languid cod
And follow where the waters flow?
Or can we be illumined in a grove
Of aspens, quaking in the light,
Releasing transcendental waves of hope
To those who meditate beneath the boughs,
Withdrawn from all disturbing sights and sounds,
Seeking satori silently below?

The road ahead is never sure,
Except to those pragmatic ones
Who know the road will always change,
But yet remain the same,
Giving them the chance to rob and kill,
And bring the naive ones to heel.

Possible it should not be, but is,
That few, firmly ensconced in rightness of belief,
Can make the many toe the line
And bend them where they will,
Can make them pray to Gods they know not of,
Forswearing any other God—or none,
Their minds obsessed by ancient prophecies,
Enthralled, bewitched, entrapped in vagrant
myth,
They fear all wisdom but their own.

Wisdom dispatched from somewhere in the sky,
By angel, courier, fax, to chosen persons,
Drawn by heavenly lottery to spread that word
above
Trailing the holy throng and hating crowd,
Race multitudes with finger in the wind held high
aloft
Setting their sails to wander with the wind,
No matter where it blows.

Can a benign cabal of international breadth,
Of intellectual discipline and hope,
Take root and flourish around the world?
Is it the talent of technology
To lose the talent to control its use?

Will the undisciplined sea of silicon
So drown us in a tidal wave of words
Our minds become unfree to think alone,
And stall 'til solid state tells us to go?
Is lack of sapiens in homosapiens so great
That evolution starts to retrogress,
Beginning a long slithery, slippery slide
To final wriggling in a final ooze?

The democratic way we say is good,
(Brief though its sojourn on the earth may be)
The best way to conduct the affairs of men.
Can it be firm enough,
This day and age, to thrive
When other ways inhibit not
The force to bury it?
No, no, it's not the technological beast
That keeps alive the problems of the world;
Nor amorality of atoms run amok,
Devoid of feeling, indiscriminate.

The world is filled with those who hate,
Vast evils done the tribes in ages past
Deep buried in their being, dreamed alive;
Fear, deep ensconced in vaulted memories,
Provoking fear of evils yet to come.
Can instant flash of prescience round the globe
Erase, transmute the tribal memories,
And let the neurons in a billion brains
Transmit not fear but hope?
What consolation lies in cultivating virtue
When will has not the means to gain the good?
Virtue holds not the lever of the world,
Turning it to the best good for all.
Morality does not defeat material force,
Nor faith in demonstration, nor commitment of
the soul.

What hope can virtue have when those who will
To use a bludgeon over other men
Invariably come forward to its use
And push aside the men who will not bow?
A vision, often dreamed in other years,
Painting vast changes in the race of man,
Has never come to pass, except in dreams.

We, being the world, cannot withdraw
Forever in a dream; and wish the bad will go away.
The world holds many men who hate.
Can thinking of it drive the fear away,
Or hating be reduced by Solemn Prayer?

—C. B. Doak

Candid photos at the recent Reunion Dinner at the Nassau Club



President Townsend and Chairman Chamberlin



Curly Marsh trying to explain why he's tieless



Justine and Bob Keidel



Marian Green and Kate Roebeling

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

12/9/91 — *Curly Marsh*

At eighty years I look ahead
And say, "No way you'll catch me dead.
I'll need ten years and do them fast—
That bunch of things I left for last."

By eighty-one it seemed quite fair,
I'd shoot my age with room to spare;
But that will not eventuate:
My best this year was eighty-eight.

My tennis game is much improved,
My serve and drive are nicely grooved.
When eighty-two the hope is Curly's
To play with men instead of girlies.

My memory pill, now on the way,
At eighty-three will make my day.
No longer Mave will need to sigh,
"Good morning, dear, please zip your fly."

The Russians, Arabs, Middle East,
The nukes, the debt, are just the least
Of problems I must now deplore
And quickly solve at eighty-four.

I must be here at eighty-five,
Great grandchildren will soon arrive.
My duty is by every means
To see they have the proper genes.

With new reverse cholesterol fix
I'll cut my count to eighty-six—
Thus shoot my age and live on fat
And eggs and cheese and all like that.

My grandpa was a D.D. Litt.
My niece a Doctor—I'm unfit
With my BA to enter heaven—
Must Ph.D. by eighty-seven.

I'll shoot my age at eighty-eight.
I did back then—but this late date?
Oh no! They always change the course—
It's longer, steeper, mostly gorse.

At eighty-nine as Curly waits
They modernize the pearly gates,
And soon he'll shoot his age with ease:
The heavenly holes are all par threes.

At ninety years I've fixed the debt,
The nukes, the Arabs—still you fret:
"Now fix the S & Ls and banks."
I've got to go now—so—NO THANKS!!

STILL UNFINISHED BUSINESS

12/9/96 — *Curly Marsh*

At eighty-five I look behind
And here is what I sadly find
That all those things I left for last
I'll have to do them twice as fast.

To shoot my age at eighty-one
I try and almost get it done.
A final five for golfer's heaven.
Instead, you guessed it, lousy seven!

At eighty-two my tennis game
Is showing signs of going lame.
The men now say, "Your game's too tame."
And girlies say, "Thanks just the same."

Now eighty-three, the memory pill
Is sadly non-existent still.
It's up to Charlie, George and Bob
To do my club retrieval job.

At eighty-four I missed the boat
And couldn't stem the Clinton vote
The Arabs, nukes and federal debt
Yes, all but Dole are with us yet.

Now eighty-five I'll get ahead,
Though no great grand-kids yet—instead
I have, with Minsi's help, acquired
Six kids and grand-kids—all step-sired.

My eighty-six cholesterol
Will end my careful health control—
Except for precept of my Doc's
Prescription: vodka on the rocks.

At eighty-seven time to say
No Ph D is on the way.
No place in chilly heaven to dwell?
I hear it's nice and warm in hell.

I will not shoot my age this year;
Too young at eighty-eight, I fear
Those longer holes and deeper rough
Enough to make this duffer duff.

And as for heaven's all par three holes
My friendly heavenly golfing souls
Say, "On those so-called easy threes
Occur the worst catastrophes!"

At eighty-nine with kith—and gin—
Will welcome year 2000 in.
At ninety take a look at sin
To just make sure it doesn't win.

I've fixed the banks and S & Ls
The CEOs are in their cells
But much remains to cramp our style.
I think I'll stick around a while.