

SERIALIZED

(in four parts)

PART FOUR

AT ABBY CREEK

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UPRIVER, BEYOND THE BEND

with

AT ABBY CREEK

poetry

by

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AT ABBY CREEK

(the complete text)

[headpiece]

The hillsides above Abby Creek, clearcut
by Publishers Paper, planted the same
summer with three-year-old firs, came
back in blackberries and choke cherries
anyway. Publishers sprayed the brush, but
didn't kill the alders or the maples;
they killed the magnolia and the apples
in the orchard by the spring. The covered

bridge at Elk City, the one in the movie,
washed out while we were in Alaska—
I went by boat, stood where the Light Brahma
rooster attacked Kori, and saw how silly
we were to clear a garden and plant potatoes
when, above the brush, nothing of us shows.

At Abby Creek

breeze rustled chittams, foxglove white
pink purple, fireweed, thistles, roses
along the tracks, meadowlarks & sparrows,
yellow tanzy heads, fleece from the curly
ram caught on berry thorns, a kite
tangled in power lines, an Okie Drifter
cast into an alder—a Brown Leghorn rooster,
wings spread, neck stretched, bled

from his beak as he hung beside Mrs. Parks' night
gown. In Elk City, they said Vern January
died as had Vern Young, names that carry
memories of Abby Creek and things right
with us, that era before you shut
our life. We're still married, but

2.

split like the maple that shaded our spring,
you remember the one there at Abby Creek,
the one that hid the magnolia (a good stick,
the maple was planked for gun stock blanks),
yes, that one you could see when walking
the railroad tracks, that one where Kathy
found the medicine bottle, now empty—
that bottle & a picture of her grandpa are all

she has of Oregon. You kept everything
else that belonged to us as a family, awards,
slides, photos, even my fishing records.
Kathy says they're in your shed, molding,
stored next to the stock blanks I couldn't fit
in (for keeping them, thanks) on my last visit.

3.

Through the park there at Elk City,
down, across the concrete and mud, I slid
my Zodiac into the Yaquina, warm & stained red
(the pulp mill at Toledo had another spill;
remember how lucky G.P. used to be,
their settling pond only overflowing
on the rising tide). The Big Elk, clearing
after last night's rain, slipped past

the stinking water, stayed against the shady
bank, not mixing with the tide in the middle.
I saw on the surface, under that broadleafed maple
with initials carved in hearts (where we
used to park by the bridge), my reflection lying
across the joined waters, still and shimmering.

4.

On a landing across the Yaquina, a yarder
tooted; its mainline snapped taut, snapped
the stick up. Like a man hung, the chokered
log dangled on the rigging, dropped, swinging
past the shovel. The green steel tower,
a gypo's Skagit with six guys, stood
erect like a bully's middle finger, stood
overlooking Abby Creek and the tanzy

filled pasture where, long ago, fallen timber
fed a whining headrig. The mill once employed
fifty men. Their sons & grandsons have moved
to Toledo, drive Hondas & Toyotas, drink beer
brewed in Milwaukee, and watch *America's Team*
on cable. I drive a Ford with a bent I-beam.

5.

A beaver with a willow branch between its curved
orange teeth saw me, slapped the river—
the cut willow, floating on the bruised water,
rocked in my wake as I sped past stakes
marking lot lines on the subdivided
south bank. Remember that corner of blackberries
& cattails between the Grange and Vern January's
fenced garden—log trucks and garden

tractors were parked on new lawns, limed
with mud from G.P.'s causticizers, sprouting
satellite dishes and skirted mobile homes.
My wake washed the sand bank and muddied
the creek coming from the bog where, trapping
muskrat, I caught mink in pushup domes.

6.

War in Israel made me a trapper...
hunting season over, I had muzzleloaders
to build, but the gas shortage left customers
sitting in two-hour lines, two
and a half hours away. I had to catch fur
if we were to stay off welfare, traded
deer antlers (trophies I'd mounted,
had bragged about) for traps. Hippies made

pipes from the antlers, sold them mail order.
Too far out of town, we agreed it was time
to move (now we can't agree on what a dime
is worth). I asked who owned the house there
at Abby Creek, the one I passed when I ran
my traps. No one would say but Don.

7.

Publishers Paper owned the house and didn't want to rent to hippies—afraid of fire—*(returning to the land* for so many kids our age—yes, we were still kids ourselves—meant living with wood stoves they couldn't bank). Don said to call Publishers, but nine hundred acres? when we couldn't afford the one-forty we rented at Logsdon.

I don't remember their forester's name.
He looked at my hair—it was on my ears;
I needed a trim...his apples & mossy pears
needed pruned. His fruitless cherries were the same
variety, and I would've left right
then, but his wife invited us in for a bite.

8.

You never knew how we got the house there
at Abby Creek. Publishers' forester served
chocolate cake and coffee, and said,
"Wayne let that f...g fence down again
last night." His bull was in Wayne's pasture,
siring blooded calves in scruffy heifers.
I asked if his red hogs were 'shires.
"Only the near ones." Then as if a foregone

conclusion, he asked if three-fifty
would be too much—Dick Parks was already
leasing the river pastures. I wanted
the place, but not that bad.
He said that'd be thirty a month, twenty
in December, as if he owed an apology.

9.

Two bedrooms and a bath upstairs,
a flagstone fireplace in the living
room, a second flue and a stove facing
the kitchen, cork tile floors, full-length
utility room: a house for growing daughters.
You hung clothes on lines strung
between the house & the woodshed, strung
chicken wire down to the creek, up & back,

and laughed when Wayne Hodges sawed the flat
roof off the chickenhouse I'd built
at Logsdon—it was too tall to fit
through the covered bridge. The roar of that
chainsaw woke up Elk City and started
roosters crowing. Even Flip barked.

10.

Flip, muzzle white, stiff and blind,
was asleep on the store's porch. I guess
the new owners adopted him. Yes,
he's fifteen or more & not the Labrador
that fought Paul Newman's dog on the inclined
ramp to the boat landing or the dog that swiped
potato salad & pickles from three hundred
picnic lunches one summer. He was a better

thief than any goose in the park. He stole
the left boot of Willie Brown's new
corks—Willie saw him & called the store.
Flip lugged it a mile to that hollow willow
by the bridge. Luckily, Frankie saw him through
the chittams he was peeling across the river.

11.

Remember the chittams, peeled trunks, drying
and dried bark, broken and sacked, sold
to the store there at Elk City—and the ferns rolled
in bundles of fifty. I don't think Vern made money
handling either. It was beer that kept him going,
nine thousand in profits that summer they filmed
Sometimes a Great Notion. Storekeeping overwhelmed
him (everyone knew it would). An old gypo who grew

up logging, the last with a whistle punk signaling
the yarder, the last to use butt rigging, Vern
hated change: soap & salad wasn't how a man should earn
his living. He sold me that True Temper casting
reel, the knucklebuster like I had as a kid,
charged four dollars for it, two onions & a fid.

12.

The tide swung my Zodiac upstream across
the mouth of Abby Creek, and covered the gravel
bar where with worms & patience Kathy & Kristel
caught that cutthroat too heavy for them to tote
up the bank. It wiggled free, flopped across moss
and berry cuttings, leaving a trail of silver
scales & slime on Kathy's shirt & sweater.
Trout & daughter, remember, dived for the water.

She couldn't hold on & Kristel was no
help. They were five & three, then, and we
were proud, humbly proud. A skinned knee,
dirty faces, cold tears, a scratched ego—
you baked them cookies, said they could go, yes,
the next tide change. But what changed was us.

13.

Frankie Hunt and I used the fid to splice eyes
in buoy lines for his crab rings. He stretched
a spool of line between the apple and the shed
where that doe hung I shot in our garden,
the one under the tarp when, wanting to socialize,
Vern Young hailed us from the boat landing
there by the bridge, offered a beer, not realizing
we couldn't stop, not with a cop

on the river checking for life jackets & fire
extinguishers. Frankie kept in the middle,
engine idling. Vern asked, "What's under the bundle?
Been fishing sidehill salmon?" A liar
with a sunburned face, I said, feeling like a louse,
"No!" I sat on the chopping block by the chickenhouse.

14.

Frankie came back from Vietnam...strange,
remember? him walking the tracks on dark nights
with a seven-cell and twenty-two. By rights,
the cops should've nailed him; they could've
if they wanted, but they knew his range,
that he kept on his side of the river,
that he shot at eyes, blue ones (there
were always a few deer among the ewes)

usually. I went with him (he wore black
jeans and blackened his face) before dawn
the time he found Old Man Abby's sheep on
the tracks. Fence down—he sent me back
for staples while he herded them through
the break...his eyes shined pale blue.

15.

There by Abby Creek hidden by berries,
that rick of alder you wanted still rambled
along the edge of our garden. I pulled
the cane back: quartered blocks, black
with orange splotches of faery jelly, with bees,
winged termites, red ants & fat white borers,
lay soggy like local news in old newspapers.
Eleven winters of drizzle, eleven summers

of crawling bugs left us and our memories—
clearing blackberries, you laughing,
stacking blocks, sitting on the rick, dressing
clothespin dolls with wild morning glories
and blouses of foxglove (Kathy, Kris & Kori
loved them)—like the alder, split & punky.

16.

Fifty-three posts: I still remember
how many I set for the chicken yard.
Saplings & salvaged plywood—I tarred
the roof I put on the chickenhouse, but
before being fenced in, they plucked bare
the hill in front of the covered porch, laid
eggs under the house, and tripped my mouse

traps....Remember the mice, how bold
they were, running across the living room—
and the mouse that hobbled from the bathroom
with a trap on its hind leg. You told
me it was time to get a cat. Wayne offered
a couple bobtailed kittens his Manx had sired.

17.

Saw a hunting cat in the river pasture,
there, then gone, a blue Manx,
one of Elmer's...heard that Toledo's banks
got his homestead after he died.
Maybe, but his road wasn't any smoother
& his chickens still roosted in the walnut tree.
(Remember him with his 30-30,
hunting roosters for Sunday dinners,

a shot each. He popped heads slicker
offhand than Don or I could punch
paper targets, same distance, from a bench.)
I'd walked in, feeling like a trespasser.
His house, boarded shut, sagged more,
and his garden had gone to weeds & borage—

18.

bees worked the small blue flowers.
I caught one by its wings, a Caucasian
like I kept before I knew how to requeen.
I let it free and watched it fly wobbly
towards the two hives of unpainted supers
stacked six high behind the barn.
A dark kitten the size of a peach can
pounced on it, yowled, batted at it,

then disappeared under a beam, bristling, ears
back. I remembered Elmer's barrel of kittens—
the barrel was still there full with kittens.
I shoved my arm in: clinging like cockleburrs,
three hissing toms, each blue
Manx, growled like long-tails never do.

19.

I pulled the kittens loose from my sleeve,
got scratched but knew I would...
the smallest two, not weaned, purred
when I stroked their ears. They yawned,
blinked barely opened eyes (I believe)
satisfied I meant no harm,
& with tongues like sandpaper, nuzzled my arm,
but the big one hissed when I stroked his chest.

He reminded me of you....Even Wayne's Manx
came from Elmer though Wayne always said, "I wouldn't
have one of his queer son-of-a-bitches." And he wouldn't
ask Elmer for another kitten when his hounds yanked
the head off his....The kitten wet in my hand;
I was going to keep him until then.

20.

Wayne brought the kittens on his second trip
(remember how his Cornbinder would wallow
through mud that stuck my Bronco;
its diesel engine, taken from a combine,
would idle down until its tall mudtread gripped
the slick clay beneath that snot that slides
into creek bottoms). Both kittens had round eyes,
ear tufts and claws hidden in fluff;

they chased buttons and mice. I had to kill
what they caught: ringworm was the toughest.
I buried both bobtailed kittens there next
to the creek, and Kori smelled of Desenex until
her birthday....The Cornbinder broke a ring,
had to be resleeved—took only a week to get it going.

21.

That Merino ram of Dick Parks, the one he put in the lower pasture with those seven ewes & lambs, remember? Coyotes killed a lamb that first night, chased the ram all the way to Mill Creek—he bred that dun Suffolk of the people who kept Dobermans, ran their dogs downriver to Ken Wildman's there in Toledo, four miles or so;

Dick laughed even though he had to run to town to get him. Well, that old ram (he must be twenty) was causing bedlam in the second, low pasture between the river and the tracks; he was mounting a blind ewe in belly-deep buttercups & she didn't know what to do.

22.

Remember the tracks, steps out of synch, and Kori, naked & wet, waving to the train. She had a baby's pot belly and that painful (she still remembers being held still) blood boil, her leg with that deadly pink line swollen hard. You lanced it...you miss her, I know you do—and it troubles you that she chose to live with me.

We don't have to end like this. Blink! See if those irritating grains of sand haven't washed away. If you've the mind, the patience of God, perhaps you'll wink at my ignorance, the injustices I did you. You've repaid them a thousandfold.

23.

The otter slide upriver of the trestle
over Abby Creek had fresh tracks
to its head: raccoon & mink tracks,
single sets, both probably by boars—
the coon left freshwater mussel
shells piled in sedges above the high
tideline; the mink had pissed by
each pile—I could smell

what he'd done....I still wrestle
with whether I ought to trap, my instincts
a traffic signal light. Trapping links
my past with the mountain men who rustled
the West from Indians. It keeps me
outdoors where I want to be;

24.

it's something I know...
Don Lynch told a story about a logger
who trapped the Big Elk after
fall rains shutdown his Cat show.

Depression. Money was scarce. Fur high.
He caught eight mink one winter,
enough for a used Model A, and flour
& beans to hold his family until July.

Cops thought he used venison for bait—
one cop was determined to trap him,
checked his sets, spied on him
& turned up missing after a bit. The State

never found the cop's body, nor
his pickup though they sniffed around like predators.

25.

Remember how Don loved his BMW,
how meticulously he polished the cooling
fins of its opposed cylinders. Riding
that bike let him escape where he grew

up; yet he wouldn't wear a helmet,
thought it was sissy...it was raining
hard in Newport; bars were closing.
Don had to put his bike on the pavement.

The driver claims he never saw the stop
Sign....I saw Jean: she's remarried
(someone local) and had her oils displayed
at the bank. She asked if I still had my shop.

Said I didn't, that I had been taking care
of you—told her about your accident last year.

26.

Bowline in hand, I walked my Zodiac
along the sand beach, ducked a sticker
draped across the cuttings of bank beaver,
and wanted once more to trap the river.
Beside an old scent pile, black
with mud carried from deep water, I
laid out a drown set in my
mind, a Victor doublespring on a slider.

How many beaver pelts make one
sheared coat? There's not enough beaver
between the pond up the creek & here
to keep two women warm unless one
wears wool....I hear a lamb
bleat across the tracks, then its dam.

27.

I climbed the bank...only the fireplace,
overgrown by trailing blackberries,
stood above charred timbers laying in V's.
A brass hinge, nails, a spider, all
that remains of the house—the spider raced
my foot, and lost. Still red & green
berries, smaller than the later Himalayans,
hung among the thorns. Tanzy & elderberry

shoots poked through the vines, the tanzy
poisonous to cattle and the elderberries, winter
feed for deer. A squirrel "chukked" from an alder
bent by its weight: the cone-cutter would scold me
from high in a fir, if there was one taller
than the stumps, fireplace or the young alder.

28.

Remember the firs, shading trilliums & shamrocks—
second-growth timber grown tall—
a bushel or two a tree, enough to fall—
the sweet smell of fresh pitch—I fell
in Alaska & Idaho—worked like an ox—
set chokers & chased landings on the Coast—
planted trees for a day, not something I'll boast
about—wore corks & could make a saw work—

fixed Homelites & Stihls and quit making gun stocks.
I stood there at Abby Creek, looked at my hands,
calloused & forgetful. Will they again cut lands
& grooves, push a chisel, tune flintlocks,
touch a graver, be firmly soft? or do they remember
only the buzz of saw chain eating live fir?

29.

The old firs that had bowed gracefully in winter storms had been fallen across the spring; their pitchy stumps (and the sawn limbs lying in their beds) were all that remained of a hundred years of growth. The house, built when the river was the only road from tidewater to the coast, had been, in the county, one of the oldest frame buildings—and if in Newport, would've been

a historical site....I was told at the store that Publishers burned the house after the bridge washed out. They punched a road over the ridge behind their mill, hauled logs for a summer, then dozed the road closed. They said, at the store, I could've worked for Publishers if I'd been here.

30.

I stood where the house stood, looked through a window no longer there, and saw again that bawling calf alone that Sabbath morning—the heifer that dropped him wouldn't suckle him. I called Dick, that was all I could do: I'd thrown my back out the night before. You were at services in Salem with Mary Connor (saw her new house...she asked about you).

Dick came limping, his back screwed up too. We lassoed the heifer, snubbed her to a post, but the calf wouldn't come near. Dick stripped most of her thin milk into a Pepsi bottle, then the two of us caught the calf—he sucked the rubber nipple and followed us around, butting the bottle.

31.

Full, purple, that patent medicine bottle
Kathy found, the one with the ground glass stopper
full of bitter herbs & alcohol, an elixir
thrown in the spring there at Abby Creek, something
of another generation—(Kathy first, then Kristel
shadowed you, digging where you dug,
bent over, finding things, a bug,
a broken canning jar, a tarnished dollar;

Kori tattled, thought you were in trouble—
I'd spanked her for muddying our drinking water.
Between ducks & mud pies, the spring that summer
ran warm & brown, bred gnats & bumble
bees, & if not for an early rain, would've dried
up)—that bottle remains a sliver in your pride.

32.

Kathy burned down our smokehouse, its racks full
of salmon. (You'd just gotten the hang of brining—
your first batch, in too strong a solution
for too long, turned white, and was too salty
to eat; your daughters & I ate it anyway.) Kristel
was helping Kathy: when asked to check the fire,
they found it smoldering. They added dry fir,
blew on the embers till flames appeared, then told

us they'd taken care of the smokehouse....Publishers
set the fire at Abby Creek, something about State
Forestry & squatters. The house & the road-building
were business losses—their earnings for the quarter,
down due to logging's depressed state,
were reinvested in land next to their forester's holdings.

33.

The shadow of a redbird, still & swift,
sailed overhead, over Abby Creek,
over hillside boomer burrows & that rick
of punky alder, the one we stacked together—
you were tired of burning green fir & drift
wood; you wanted heat, the sort seasoned alder
gives. I fell those trees by the river,
blocked & split them, easy work compared to elm

or oak, woods Dad split. He would lift
blocks overhead, swinging block
and axe, again, again, again. Shock
busted blocks of hard hardwood, left
on the farm for the next tenants—I hardened
early muscles splitting wood alongside Dad.

34.

I was in the barbershop, listening to a story
about a vulture and a hummingbird, when
the movie crew called for extras. Paul Newman
was in a log truck, going down Main Street,
Toledo. The casting director needed scuzzy
looking loggers, thought I might want to make
a few bucks. I told the barber he hadn't finished
his story....Seems there was a vulture,

who looked down when soaring and saw deer
and rabbits, carrion alongside the road.
The hummingbird beat its wings hovering
and found only flowers. They both eat their
fill in sight of one another, thought what a good
land this was, and flew off, soaring & hovering.

35.

Summer afternoons on the porch of Hodges',
Wayne, Don, and I drank ice tea
and Blitz, and shot our .45-70's
at molehills and cowpies until
someone missed at forty rods;
we told about deer we'd killed or should've
(the booms & splattered dung frightened calves
and huddled Wayne's Angus heifers against

the gate by the road), but we never mentioned
any Parks. Wayne shot a Winchester;
I, a rolling block; but Don was a trader.
He swapped rifles as often as he changed
shirts or tried to talk Grandma Hodges
into selling him, a Parks, her circus glass.

36.

Wayne, his artist brother & mother, the last
of the Hodges in the valley, lived on the family farm
up the Big Elk...a branch of a schoolmarm
with roots in West Virginia, coming West,
finding others like them, they cast
words that became bullets & a shooting feud
lasting until World War Two. Guns used
in the county, low serial number Lugers

& Winchesters, are in collections across the country,
but the *original* mountain rifle Don sold
the museum there in Newport was one I built
using a Springfield lock & a piece of curly
maple from that tree at Abby Creek. I told
him the screw threads weren't authentic, but

37.

I took the money....I'd killed a bear—
that was the rifle in the picture with Kori.
We had prints made from the slide, me
holding the bear's head, her foot in its blood.
I held her, you took the picture
and traded the butchered meat for beefsteak.
Its hide lay at the foot of our bed—to make
peace when it started making you sneeze, Don

took it to a gun show: "Very old, tanned
by squaws, chewed with their teeth, looky here,
the musket ball hole, big enough to stand
in." Across the room, an old man in overalls
pointed to carpet tacks in the stock
of a Sharps and said, "Look, Indian work."

38.

John Schirmer saw Indians, shy as elk,
digging clams on the tide flats the year
the first American Eagle Lugers
were imported from Germany. (The store at Elk City
sold one...someone took
a shot at someone else, and the pistol
was tossed into the river.) John's dad, his rifle
to his shoulder, watched, from the ridgetop, the dozen

women and their children load baskets
with horsenecks and cockles, then fade
into the timber. The Schirmers hadn't seen them
before, nor saw them again. Years later, John fit
a new barrel to a liberated Luger, made
new toggle pins, and told me about *them*.

39.

Remember the dugout canoe I found,
full of berry leaves, an old growth
fir hollowed & shaped with an adze, both
ends identical. I never knew who called
the curator for the county museum. It was bound
to happen: the canoe was considered a major find,
winning the curator a trip to Washington, D.C.
Preserving the canoe meant preserving

a bit of a vanished culture....I went
to see it when I was last in Newport,
signed in with other guests, read a report
and saw the picture of Old Archie bent
over, adze in hand, hewing bow or stern.
Seems the canoe was carved in 1961.

40.

Twisted, its bow buried by blackberries,
grass growing in its stern—that two-seater
there by the tracks, long & narrow, the speedster
of its day, was the rowboat the newspaper wrote
about in its feature story, "Elk City Memories."
The reporter spent an hour drinking beer,
took pictures of the covered bridge, but never
saw the boat. Vern Young told about

rowing to Toledo with barrels of moonshine.
But facts, like fruit canned in glass-topped
Kerr jars missing their rubber rings,
ferment: the park, *a wonderful place to share wine
with a friend*, became the midpoint of a scenic option
in the article, a part of a series about remembering.

41.

Rootbound and going to seed, spindly
green stalks, the rhubarb by the rowboat,
descendant from the patch at the fire lookout
on Euchre Mountain, came by Yankee whaler
from Russian-America, crossed the Great Prairie
in a covered wagon and grew under a window
of oiled buckskin for a summer. (Although
you have some roots in Eugene, I left some

at Abby Creek.) Don and I lofted
lines from the rowboat. We were always going
to build a shell like it; but its planking
was yellow cedar, its ribs & knees were bent
oak, and we never had money for store-bought
lumber, nor for a better strain of *pie plant*.

42.

Wilted brown leaves hang like cocoons
from hardened berry cane....Southern Pacific
sprayed their right-of-way, targeting specific
broadleaves. But without dill or tomatoes to kill—
our garden may still be the only one
they've ever paid for, and who believes
they *target specific broadleaves*
when they blast everything as far as their

sprayers reach. We went to the Dunes
on the fifty dollars they thought fair
for your tomatoes, fought sand jiggers
while roasting marshmallows, waited till the moon
rose, then hiked arm in hand across the white
drifting mounds, cold in the moonlight.

43.

DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED?...No,
I won't leave anything out. We left Lakeview
slumbering, left behind sawmills, potato
sheds, elevators, wheat fields, passing through
Beatty—where a sprinkler had irrigated a fence
all night, ice welded tumbleweeds to the wire.
A curve bent uphill, a moment of negligence,
the Suburban snapped crosswise, a quick shutter,

an on-coming cattle truck...in the middle,
across the centerline, the windshield shattered!
Now crumpled fenders, glass chips like grenade
fragments, floorboards arched to the dash, steel
buckled & driven backwards, the Suburban, dead
as a steer hit by a triphammer, bounced backward.

44.

Where did our goats go? The Nubian kids,
twins romping through the house like puppies
not paper trained, might still be
milkers. They were Flappy's—an eight pounder,
the best we had. I couldn't get rid
of her when running my trapline: she stayed
two steps behind. Her bleats spooked
deer but attracted a coyote. I collected

fifteen dollars bounty and sold his pelt
for another twenty. Only paid twenty-five
for her, a herd goat who habitually
stepped in her milk pail. I held
her still, blocked her legs with mine until
her quick feet wanted to stay still.

45.

Mrs. Parks back porch was full of bummer lambs—again—a dozen or more—they wouldn't hold still—up on the freezer—down around, baa'ing—two with long tails—up, over—"Hey! I'll feed you, NO, Don't!"—I caught the one nibbling on my pants—he fought loose, squirted me with pellets—Shelly

laughed. She was home from the school for the deaf. A young lady with her degree, she wasn't the wild tomboy who knew what her daddy and granddad were thinking before they did. She had been stiff and formal until the lamb shot me, then suddenly, she was once again that little girl, all giggly.

46.

Old Man Abby took the triplet lamb from his ewes, knocked those lambs in the head and threw them in piles as if they were docked tails...Dick's wife rescued six or more every spring (they always had bummer lambs of their own that she bottle fed)—her lambs, mostly Suffolk, were already a hundred pounds apiece and gave her no peace.

She pointed to two, broad shouldered and meaty; said, "I'm takin' them to the fair." A hundred blue ribbons for jam and rams hung on pegs in her kitchen. Faded rosettes for *Best of Show* were fly-specked, but the specks were bread dough, dried hard.

47.

Mrs. Parks showed me the ribbon she won
(and the newspaper picture) for the white turkey
tom raised from a poult I hatched at Abby Creek.
The tom, as wide as he was high,
strutted in the backyard. The only one
Dick kept (he turned down ten dollars
a pound from a breeder in Albany—the breeder
even knew the Broadbreasted White was from a Bronze),

the old white tom tried to impress
a black lamb, but the lamb wouldn't hold still.
He gobbled and the lamb baa'ed; he gobbled
and the lamb ran, up, over, yes,
over that Blue Heeler Dick said
would hold sheep in hell until bred.

48.

RIGHT LEG BENT ABOVE YOUR KNEE, you didn't know
where you were, where your daughters were; you looked
for them behind the seat. The Y-gash across your forehead
bled; your left hip hurt, hurts. I knew, I know.

The ambulance arrived: West Medic One. Back board,
Philadelphia collar, IV's, oxygen, Code 3 to Merle West
Medical Center; name, address, employer, each request
repeated until answered; insurance carrier, they wanted

to know, but you were worried about Kori (she had
a concert at the junior high—you wanted to hear
her sing). Nurses materialized, then disappeared
like ghosts on a lonely road & pain measured

in heartbeats flashed, rumbled through bruised arteries.
Amidst the lightning, you prayed. I heard your pleas.

49.

X-RAYS ORDERED of your lower spine, pelvis, right knee, but the gash interested the nurses most: it would show, does show. Two techs faceless as machines, a practiced procedure, left & right denoted by a lead marker caught & pulled off, later found on your gurney.... "The x-ray of your knee & back are unremarkable, but you have a posterior dislocation of your right hip." Dr. W— softly

asked if you understood...you nodded
yes, your mother had polio. You signed the consent form, read aloud. The words meant nothing, except the ones about dying. You didn't want to die, not then anyway. You knew your lungs were weak; you're in the high risk group. But the pain in your

50.

LEFT HIP, pain intense as childbirth though different, like hitting your crazy bone, came with the regularity of heartbeats. Your signature was barely recognizable, but you knew what you signed, a contract to make you whole again to the best of their ability. With Dr. W— at his side, Dr. S— began a general examination as nurses snipped blouse, bra, slip, skirt, panties.
Don't cut my slip, it's the only one I brought

from Alaska—you also wanted them to save your panties: they were new, they cost fourteen dollars at Nordstrom's in Anchorage. I know, you told me before your words, snatched by the pain, scattered, scud on an ebbing sea. Asked your occupation, you said, "Housewife," which was true but not the truth. You, who in past life

51.

WAS A MOTOR VEHICLE REP and had fished commercially, told of asthma & uterine tumors. Dr. S— asked about a well-healed, low abdominal scar. You said you'd had a tubal ligation. Right leg shortened, externally rotated & abducted: Dr. W— thumped your foot, asked where it hurts. "In my hip!" Faintly, you added, "My leg's broken." You heard someone say, "We know." I wasn't there, but I've read reports & logs, your record.

10:33—anesthetized, you didn't feel the dampened crunch of bone galling bone as your right leg was flexed, but Dr. W— did when he pulled on and rotated your leg outward. Later, he told me he did not know about the break till he felt the bony crepitation; he really didn't know....Yes, it was negligence.

52.

MORE X-RAYS (of your right hip & femur).
You had an extremely comminuted fracture, but your hip showed a concentric reduction.
11:16—O.R. Dr. W— worked quickly, found one spike of cortex, allowing him to approximate femur length. Twelve screws in a standard 14-hole side plate—he didn't try to fill the gaps with chips...it didn't heal.
You underwent a bone graft in April, then another the following April.

How much do you remember?
Any? The pain? mood tapes?
The drugs?
Can you cry?
Do you?
Where are your daughters?
Do you recognize me?
Yes, it is a lovely day.
The flowers are pretty.
I know your hip hurts.
No, I don't think it's too early to plant.
Do you like strawberries? You didn't used to.
I'll bring some next time.

No, it's not April. It's May.

53.

YOU SPENT THE NIGHT of October 30th, in CCU, telephoned your sister in the morning & complained about the pain in your left hip; you tried to describe it, said it felt like your leg was sucked through water, like plunging a toilet. I know, I knew that feeling, heard it when my shoulder was dislocated twenty years earlier, a middle of the night headon that put me in Merle West....The physical therapist

visited, explained about the tilt table, tortuous as the medieval rack. Days became oriented around how much you must endure—you slipped on the Rack, bore weight on your left foot. Your blood pressure rose 70 points on November 6th. That's when it happened, when your mind exploded, but the therapy continued through the 11th.

54.

X-RAYS WERE AGAIN TAKEN on the 12th. Dr. W—'s entry in your progress notes for that day reads:

x-ray of pelvis shows left posterior dislocation of hip!! Reviewing all x-rays with radiologist (Dr. M—) reveals original x-ray of pelvis at time of admission is labeled wrong....

The entry goes on, reasons & justifications are given, but his open reduction didn't end your pain. Rather,

the pain intensified when a student nurse rolled you without an abduction pillow between your legs, causing a recurrent dislocation the 26th. Dr. W— told me he worried about the femur head, about a malpractice suit, but he denied both under oath. Yes, a quarter of a million is a lot of money, but not for what you've lost, what we—

55.

Remember our bronze toms....I bought them as poults from that feed store in Corvallis. They were walkers. Bolder than chicks, they circled the feeder in cliques, peeped & pecked at each other's feet, got spraddle-leg & starved with full crops—and all the while, my ignorance was the cause. The state library sent *Diseases of Poultry*.

Diet, the text said, determined whether fowl got sick or got parasites—its claims for diet seemed exaggerated: if we were chickens, cancer would no longer be hated. I gave the poults goat milk (that was the trick) instead of water, and never lost another as long as I fed chick starter & clabber.

56.

We carried seventeen turkeys over that first winter. They roosted in (and broke down) that young *Homestead* apple by the shop....John's dad developed that strain (and others) and the strawberries specially adapted to the tide flats. The tree I always wanted a graft from is the candy apple in his mother's orchard. I was there

only once, and I wish I could remember what its apples tasted like. I remember I never had any as good; I remember they were crisp like fresh iceberg lettuce, sweet as ripe navel oranges and smelled like peppermint and...I don't remember.

57.

You had some of John's dad's strawberries
the time we held a match at Freemans'.
We went in that aluminum stiff of John's.
There were four does in the orchard (maybe more)
that stayed there while you picked cherries
with Mrs. Freeman ...John, Alfred, the Boys
and I shot. That was the summer I always
won, regardless of which rifle I used.

Young Hank & I picked the berries
for shortcake after dinner. My T-shirt
was black with mosquitoes (the berries were worth
getting bit), and the evening breeze carried
the scent of saltwater and new fir
tips...we held hands, lovers.

58.

Alfred, 70, had been a pro wrestler who'd
met Robin Reed in the ring; he could still jerk
his weight, rope start a fifty Merc
and win beers arm wrestling. His Winchester
shot okay—quarter minute groups—and could
have won anywhere. But John, the one to beat
every match, could shoot better than even he thought.
Yet neither he nor Alfred (nor I) would enter

regional matches so only those of us who shot
together odd Sundays knew about them
(or us), or knew they were past their prime.
My best group only tied that group John shot
along the bay. There wasn't any wind at Alfred's
where I shot mine, with a rifle John barreled.

59.

Art came out for shortcake (his new rifle hadn't arrived, and I'd beaten his Sako too many times); complained about mosquitoes & the damage to the hemlock behind the target, about fourwheelers & motorcycles, about a beetle (almost as big as his groups) in the berries. Mrs. Freeman gave him a piece of cherry pie instead—and to Alfred, John said,

"Cherry pits could make a fella mad without trying too hard." You were quick to ask Art if he got a pit. He flicked his fork at John. Do you remember what he mumbled? I didn't hear, and he wouldn't repeat it—and John could be as deaf as Shelly when he wanted.

60.

Seventeen turkeys were too many to feed all winter. The second year we kept the Black, two Bronze toms, that inept White tom, and three White hens. That White tom never could distinguish feed sacks from hens. Don said, "It's that artificial insemination, it does that to you." And he added something about dildos

that made you blush....Linda came to see you that winter. Her crewcut raised questions in Siletz. You said she'd changed, and I believed you until, after dinner, we played chess. Like when we'd played on the mountain, in ten moves I pinned her white queen.

61.

We visited Linda how many summers ago?
She was a fire lookout manning
that tower out of Day's Creek. You hadn't seen
her since college, didn't know she'd had a child
put up for adoption....You could see Milo
and the Adventist academy where my step dad
worked from her tower. He had remarried—
that was the trip we met Naomi.

Back from Alaska, I went to see Lyle
a little too late: he'd died three years
ago. Naomi had passed away a month earlier.
I talked with a neighbor for a while,
admired Naomi's Mustang, & returned through Canyonville,
got on the freeway & wished I'd written Lyle.

62.

In the tower, you talked with Linda in whispers.
Not till later, much later, did you tell me
that she'd earned her living as an Arthur Murray
dance instructor....I didn't make fun of her,
not that I couldn't have voiced one-liners
like Don or Wayne. Dances were excuses for fighting—
even in high school. I avoided walking
past the Grange there at Rose Lodge

on Saturday nights. Fights spilled out
in the parking lot. Loggers not afraid
of tall timber busted heads & cherries
as if fists & f...g were all life was about.
I haven't been in a fight since I fractured
that guy's skull in Salem—he lost his memory.

63.

That White tom ate well (ate Super Dairy, which was fair considering your Alpine billy would squeeze into the chickenhouse & eat Laying Ration & scratch), his breast sweet as if sugar-cured...we tried sugar curing venison, took that crock of yours, covered layered steaks with brown sugar & pepper. Nancy Brilley said her mother's family kept their summer meat that way, but sugar costs more than electricity today. Freezers aren't that expensive & those steaks were hard as jerky. I'll save sugar for cakes & horses; if I want sweets I'll buy candy instead of butchering a White tom in February.

64.

I always wanted to enter that Black hen in turkey races. She was faster than the bobcat that chased her over the cedar knob there at Logsdon. I shot the cat. Don wanted its pelt; he wanted a fur hunting pouch like mine....Dennis Brilley made mine when I got to admiring his, made from sealskin when he began muzzleloading.

Ronny Oleman said he could patch the hole my .54 made in the cat— he sold its pelt to a buyer from North Platte, Nebraska. And I set iron on every knoll between Siletz & Elk City, mostly flasher sets. It's really fur buyers that make us trappers.

65.

I trapped in high school, raccoons & muskrats,
cubby sets & baited boards. Coons
weren't worth anything, except for making coonskin
caps like Davy Crockett's. I tanned three
pelts—and Ben broke their tails making a hat.
Seems silly now: I went around hitting walls
& trees at the time; one punch was all
I wanted ...till Thanksgiving. Then I wanted

to know where he'd seen all those bucks.
Lyle & I killed spikes. Ben killed
a gray-faced two-point in rut.
It took the three of us to drag him to the truck;
and the three bucks fed us through April
when Ben & I started catching trout.

66.

I would step out of the gunshop,
holler, "Here Turk, turk," shake
a feed bucket, and the Black hen would break
from the berries & come running across the pasture,
up the rifle range & past the backstop.
She ran low, legs close together, outdistancing
the others. She was bold & black as a starling,
as narrow breasted as a wild turkey. She nested

under a clump of sword fern there
at Abby Creek. It took a month to find
her clutch, eighteen eggs. She hatched
all but one. She ate out of my hand,
let me handle her, followed me as if attached.
If there was a bird I couldn't kill, it was her.

67.

We lost a White hen to the train—clipped
her breast; she died from the bruise days later.
The Bronze toms were identical till one gobbler,
wattles bright red, neck stretched,
head down, tried to gobble down
Southern Pacific....I heard his whelps
over the engine's whistle; the hen came to help.
I thought she ducked away in time....A mound

of bronze feathers by the fence, the tom wasn't dead,
but wasn't really alive either. I threw him in the shed:
he wasn't fit to eat but his feathers were okay
for fly tying. I intended to pluck him
after a cup of coffee, but didn't get back to him
till dark....He was pecking at moldy hay.

68.

A mangled form, back & legs broken,
that Bronze tom lay more dead than
alive for a week. I set food & water
where he could reach both—had a helleva time
keeping the other tom from raping him,
especially after I began putting him in the pasture.

He pecked at grass & grasshoppers, basked
in the sun & didn't do much else from May
till July. We talked about eating him but always
found reasons to put off butchering the gobbler.
Dick thought I was foolish, that I ought
to kill him before he lost too much weight; but
on our anniversary (we slept in), he staggered out
to the pasture, knockkneed, but again a walker.

69.

Your dad gave us the pair of Emdens that stood waist-high. The one-eyed gander hated yappy dogs & beaver castor on a scent stick—the longspring 4's didn't break his leg (I'd thought they would), but didn't make him any friendlier either. He got in a drown set, pulled the anchor, thirty pounds of window sash weights,

but couldn't drag it around like that old blanket beaver had there in the pond at Logsdon. Still, when the Ward's store manager & Don came out later that same afternoon, he bit Don & flogged the red-checkered pants Gary wore....Gary left him his pants.

70.

George came out to Abby Creek, bought my Bronco & asked if I would drive his Land Cruiser to Homer, Alaska, for expenses & air fare home....I called you from Kenai, said, "Kill the chickens, I'm falling timber out the North Road."...Dick Parks still has our incubator, the one your dad built; still hasn't used it. He only bought it

to help us out, the reason Vern Young bought my *Contender*. I'd buy it back if I could, and buy him a beer....Remember how Vern would stand on the bridge in the red suspenders he'd got from *Loggers' World*—red bowtie, a *Payday* work shirt, blue jeans, ready for Sunday.

71.

The goose disappeared when we went to Tahoe that October...remember trying to get Kristel to look at the moon over Emerald Bay. Still three, she wouldn't look, said, "I saw it before." And she had...over the Ochocos, sitting like an owl in a Ponderosa pine; laying on Pool Slough, in ripples floating away from Freemans' dock; rising like a balloon

above the lily pads & stumps at Valsetz. Bats dipped & zagged. Crickets chirped, and a bass tried to swallow the moon, splashed back into the pond...and fog off the Siletz settled over us. Now you, not Kristel, say you've seen it before—and you have.

72.

The goose had covered the gander's blind side; without her, he shied away from shadows. But the gray Chinese I'd stepped on (the toe of my boot split her scalp—I put ointment between skull & skin, and tied her back together with butterfly bandages, not expecting her to live....I kept her caged until she straightened her neck & held her head

upright)—wary as a wild goose, she stayed by the creek until the gander stepped in my trap. I found them together, him with his wings spread and she, a little ahead & to his side. I wrapped my coat around his wings, held his beak—and she hissed, made little 'onks & squawked.

73.

Frankie still had that Brown Leghorn rooster we gave him, the one we got from Murray McMurray in the hundred chick grab bag. That day, the rooster stayed on the hill, wouldn't stay still—he'd had his neck & saddle feathers plucked too many times. We couldn't catch him, even with the salmon net. We did catch a boomer—or he caught us, I'm not sure

which. It was like when Ben snagged the otter: after two hours, the otter walked ashore, glared at all of us standing there with our gaff hooks, then turned around & popped Ben's twenty pound test. The boomer popped his teeth, popped the cords of the net, and popped

74.

down his tunnel...The first boomer I remember was on the porch at Boring, under Mom's washing machine. Dad wasn't home; Mom told me to "kill that thing." It looked like a short-tailed muskrat, fought like a rat when cornered. (Most of the ones I've seen since, other than at Abby Creek, have been killed by dogs.) It was years later when no longer interested in frogs & moths that I realized whose half-tunnels those

were across hillsides. By then, I'd fallen timber for a season, clearcutting second-growth. I'd built bench-rest rifles & both of Andersons' guns (theirs were my first muzzleloaders); I'd bought the Bronco, new, had fished for Kamloops in B.C., and had watched Americans walk on the moon.

75.

A redtail sat among ripening gravensteins
in the tree beside Frankie's chickenhouse. The hawk
watched hens loll in the dust, squawk
& scratch, & herd broods of chicks across the yard
to where, spilled last winter, a sack of grain
sprouted in the gravel driveway. The chicks peeped
like gradeschool children on a field trip;
they stopped here, there, & wouldn't stay in line.

The redtail craned his neck, blinked,
then opened his wings & glided down to the chickenhouse.
He looked around before walking in—
Frankie didn't reach for his rifle as I thought
he would. Rather, he said, "It's noon." And I looked
where he pointed: the hawk was eating Layer Ration.

76.

Seeing a carpenter ant hurrying across
a weathered-gray plank, the Brown Leghorn
rooster pecked, twisting his beck. Torn
in half, the ant tried to crawl on.
The rooster waited until the halves quit tossing
about, then ate both just as he'd done as a chick.
I'd put a shovelful of anthill in with those chicks
when they were four weeks old. They huddled in a corner
at first, then the boldest little cockerels
ventured out to see what wiggled. An ant
crawled on one's foot—he pecked at the ant,
killing it. And a hundred chicks pecked at middles,
snipping ants in two. They were the only ones
that'd eat them: chicks swallow whole ants only once.

77.

I stood beside the scorched flagstones—
willow leaves panted in the breeze that followed
the tide upriver; a splash, another. Hollowed
by the darkness, both splashes sounded like 'cuts
jumping for dipping caddices. A hatch of stones
and small mayflies had been coming off the water
when the moon swung through the stumps & alders,
climbed over the store, over Elmer's

and behind the high clouds over Table Mountain.
Another splash, another, and another. Shad!
They're late; they should've spawned
in April, coming up with springers. I'd forgotten
the Yaquina had a run—and used to have strippers
when, along the river, there were only loggers.

78.

Frankie called in May the year of the strike, said,
"Shad's in, bring a light." The soft darkness,
sweet as maple blossoms, hid tangled grass
and grabby stickers—and Don & Leonard
drifting quietly towards the swimming head
of a beaver that turned out to be a bear.
They got too close, flipped over;
the bear woofed, splashed, slapped a hole

in the boat and tried to climb on top of it,
but it rolled again, then settled out of sight.
They lost a lantern and a .22 that might
have been valuable someday. Leonard visited
the outhouse, borrowed a pitchfork
& joined Frankie & me on the bar above the Forks.

79.

Don found a fifth of snakebite cure
& a lantern that needed new batteries.
He cursed the boat, the bear & the berries,
waded to where Frankie waited, poised, fork
ready. A shad bumped my legs, but disappeared
when I shined my light down. She charged again,
trying to drive me away from her spawning
gravel. I gaffed her. Heavy with roe, silver,

tender-mouthed, long as my arm & hand,
she was as bony as a pike. Frankie smoked
her, one of a dozen speared before Don told
Leonard to move over, he was too close—and
the *Leonard* he told to move "woofed." Don
plowed through berries, but the bear was faster than

80.

I was getting my rifle.....I haven't been back
to that bar since. I keep thinking about Bear Creek
and its salmon run. Unseen pricks, like the ticks
of a clock without hands, remind me that I stood
with a hay hook in each hand & gaffed sorebacks—
I was twelve & thirteen, and there for fun. Loaded
into a pickup, the spawners were taken to Otis, smoked,
and sold to tourists. I still dislike tourists;

yet it isn't their fault that we killed the run
in Bear Creek. Nor is it the fault of OreAqua
that state biologists, at night, netted coho
on that bar where we went shadding, and stripped spawn
for the commercial hatchery....I went to Alaska
and found runs like Bear Creek used to know.

81.

I stood beside Don when that spring chinook decided to run the riffles. He drove his pitchfork through the fish, his foot & into the gravel which rolled & exploded as forty pounds of salmon thrashed & splashed. He hollered, the handle shook, and Frankie fell down in the river, laughing. Leonard didn't know what was happening, and my gaffhook was hanging in a tree. I took

a shot at its head. The river boiled, & the echo rumbled upstream, then down, then up the canyon by the orchard. The springer, stunned by the concussion, was filleted & split among us. Leonard had to go to work, graveyard shift in the pulp mill. He was stopped by a cop who thought he'd killed

82.

a deer in the orchard. Frankie and I saw the flashing red lights. Pointing across the river, he said, "Like 'Nam." A red circle in the dark, held by leaves for a moment, then passing on. No bones broken in his foot, Don gnawed on smoked shad while we poured peroxide through the hole....The red light would slide up tree trunks, jump from branch to branch

and linger on the bridge, but it wouldn't cross. Two strands of cable (discarded mainline) anchored in concrete, spanned by railroad ties, the bridge had been built by Frankie's dad. Under my Bronco, it sagged & squirmed, reminding me, each time, why I'd just as soon walk across.

83.

You said everyone we knew on the Coast were hicks, that I never made enough money, that I was just like them. No? I was worse? They were honest loggers and millworkers, I could do better. I'd like to know how I could. Don, without tricks or props, was the best storyteller I've heard. Wayne worked in the pulp mill, had a herd of brood cows and a portfolio of DOW

blue-chip stocks. Dick owned whole creeks, thousands of acres, cattle, sheep, timber; the Freemans', 53 million feet of timber. John had six million feet & enough sticks rafted in the slough to pay his taxes for years. Frankie, I'll admit, since Vietnam, didn't work regular.

84.

John logged with a Cat and a skiff, rolling bucked logs and tree-length sticks into the slough before D.E.C. nixed the practice. He towed rafts of 50 thousand feet with a ten-horse Merc, fighting the tide part way to Newport. He used to sell to G.P., but Georgia Pacific wanted logs for the price

of stumpage—75 dollars a thousand. The Japs paid a hundred four and would take his hemlock, and dollars are important when trees take so long to grow. "We send," he said, "them logs and get cheaper plywood back than Toledo makes. We must be Democrats."

85.

John made bullet-swaging dies, his shaper
for making semi-inlet stock blanks,
a gas boat engine & the boat. He planked
walnuts he'd planted along the slough as a kid
and got oysters to spawn despite importers
saying the Yaquina was too cold. He'd
set gillnet—150 fathoms—and had crabbed
in the bay....He took me crabbing;

we set rings in that hole by River Bend
and pulled them full. He didn't measure.
Instead, he hefted each crab, kept the heavy
ones (the light ones, he said, hadn't
filled out since their molt) & the heartier
Jap crabs that came with the oyster seed.

86.

John and I filled a couple washtubs
with rock crabs & Dungies, put a barrel
to boiling at Freemans'—and you, Kathy, Kristel,
John & the Boys spooned out backs and cracked
claws & legs till you were too stuffed to rub
on bug dope. Whatever Margaret had didn't work
anyway...she and I sat on the bulwarks
(John had, long ago, given up trying

to get his wife to eat unclean meats),
laughing at you & the Boys. I scratched my finger
on a nail, washed it off in the saltwater—
and it swelled up & turned black. "Beats
me what's wrong," John said. "It's a shame
it's your trigger finger, fingers aren't the same."

87.

John and Margaret visited you in the hospital there at Klamath Falls, when we first tried putting us back together. They sat beside your bed; you lowered its bars, raised its head and talked about Alaska, about Kathy & Kristel fishing & hunting—and John, with a hearing aid (finally!), turned to me and told how they'd killed elk in the junipers & pines near Baker.

His mom's place was sold to a developer. A doctor built a house on the island—and John was selling land instead of timber to pay his taxes, was shooting a Japanese-built Howa action, said, "Better buy one, I bought all I could get." I bought a barreled action, but didn't like how it shot.

88.

I saw a brush bunny, sitting by the road.
There at dark, it was still as a stone
so on a blade of grass, I blew a squeaky moan
like a child crying, like I'd first heard
up Widow Creek....Rifle in hand, I followed,
confused, the child growing frantic as he
or she ran down a skidroad, away from the shabby
homesteads that fronted the county road.

The weasel caught the rabbit, three times
its size—the rabbit's squeals were like Kori's
when she, at one, swallowed both hooks of an Okie
Drifter, orange as a gumbdrop.... Three times
I shot at the weasel that wouldn't hold still;
I killed the rabbit, but didn't get the weasel.

89.

I heard tree frogs and no-see-ums
and remembered Don & the cabbage rolls Jean
asked me to judge. I found Don had no reason
to complain, but he said the rolls, like stories,
were better the second day—and we ate them
while he told about fixing saws for G.P.'s
Indian falling crew. The McCulloughs (a disease
according to Homelite dealers) would start

and idle in the shop, but not in the woods.
Before the crew packed their saws off the landing,
they tried to start them, and would twirl
them over their heads by their starting cords
if they wouldn't run. Instead of falling
timber they should've been Olympians throwing the hammer.

90.

"You heard what happened to Ray," Don said.
"He was working opposite Bluejay Creek,
on the cow's face there.... The stick
pulled its stump, rootwad just let go. He landed
on his head, saw still running. Said
he didn't feel too bad once he got his eye
back in. Poured himself a cup of coffee. That eye,
he had to hold it in. Said the steam bother it

some. He waded the river, sat on the road
until the crummy came...sat there listening
to that saw of his run. Those 125's are tough
sonnabitches. That saw idled
until it ran outta gas. Forty minutes, laying
on its side, under the stump. That's tough."

91.

Don wanted to hunt Hart Mountain with Leonard, Dennis & me—I'd built him a rifle, full stock (tight curl), half-round barrel, .58 caliber. We'd sighted it in over headlights and left for the desert before morning. Dennis made a neck shot on a five-point, and his buck & mine hung on the meat pole. Don saw only a porcupine & coyotes, got his ramrod stuck wiping between shots

and had to piss down the barrel to soften the fouling enough he could pull it out on the mountain. "I need a hunting pouch," he moaned, soaking in the hot spring. "I'll trade that Marlin you want for your horn & bag." ...I had a buyer for the Marlin & a year to make another *possibles bag*.

92.

Don & I laughed about people who *fell* timber instead of *fall* it. A salesman who dressed tales in tin hats, corks and stagged pants, Don used words like falling wedges, guiding stories to orders. "Being a storyteller is lying about the truth," he said, sipping a Blitz, leg over the arm of his chair. Jean scowled: *Why don't you get a job like everyone*

else. Her words weren't spoken, but I heard them. Don opened another beer, rapped his son with his knuckles for being stupid, belched, complained about the TV, hollered something about homework at Magdalen, then said, "Tell something not about loggers & poaching."

93.

Magdalen said, "Tell *Royal Bull*, the thing you told when Dad & Uncle Elmer were looking at trucks."

"The royal bull gathers his harem, flashes polished antlers, while lesser bulls bugle challenges and calves butt heads. He ignores two spikes, one to either side of a maple already yellow. The pipings of the spikes, shrill to the point of squeaking, awakens the cows who begin to mill about. The yearlings, ready to woo

cows not ready to breed, sneak close and don't see the herd bull till the warning's bellowed. The one on the left ducks left and doesn't stop until topping the ridge. The other rode a cow till the bull returned—sharp tips goad the right spike's rump. The spike flees to the ridgetop, and the left spike, with ease,

slips among the cows. Again the warning, the chase and the other spike's return—by the third day, the lord bull grows weary. He offers grace and a cow to both yearlings. But after a day sniffing but being rebuffed, each spike looks away, sees the other's cow behind the tree and that the other is no stronger than he.

The left spike meets the other's charge with a charge of his own. Heads slam together, twist apart, and slam again as charge again meets charge. They battle, never gaining, never losing ground, while their cows feed on the choicest foliage till full. Receiving no attention, they remembered the bull;

they return to the royal bull's harem, leaving behind the antler clashings of battling spikes."

94.

"Dad stuttered, got mediocre grades, rode a motorcycle (a midsize Harley) & began driving truck in '32. But for weeks after he died, I remembered only the yellow-throated snapping turtle he'd turned loose in the Wabash. Tilting each step (it had three legs), the turtle waded into the muddy river, snapped, and disappeared.

"We had kept it in a #2 galvanized washtub, had fed it hamburger & dead flies, and had walked it around the yard with a string tied to the stub of its missing leg. I was afraid of its snap, would not pick it up until it (I don't remember how old I was, don't believe I'd started school) had drawn itself into its shell. The string was black nylon

fishline....Dad didn't fish though he had a steel rod and baitcasting reel, won in a raffle. He hadn't fished since the War. He was in the 3rd Division, 15th Infantry, C Company—like the turtle, he wouldn't talk....I watch every newsreel and look at the faces of Allied soldiers, hoping to see Dad. Yet if I really wanted to see him again, I could shave and look in a mirror or look at my brothers, both cleanshaven. They don't remember the turtle—there used to be a picture in a book, an autographed first edition of *Deerslayer*, of Dad showing it to Ben, the only one of us father to a son. Ben works for the Forest Service, bakes sweet rolls, writes religious tracts, makes

me look small, and claims not to remember anything prior to Vietnam. He was with us when that snapping turtle stepped forward on its missing leg, looking like it was continually tripping."

95.

"You couldn't do it?" Nancy asked, checking packages of rennet & sausage casings. Sheep gut, not pig. She'd tried deer: they were cheap enough, but Dennis wouldn't help scrap & wash intestines. He said it was enough to just bring home meat. "We'll have to reform L.C.P.A.," he said, balancing his cup on the *One-A-Day* bottle, "if you're interested in the nature

of memory." Nancy was taking a *How To Write* correspondence course; she brought out the lessons about using memory to achieve deep meaning, but found nothing about deer or loggers. "Write about everyday things" was the advice given—Dennis said, "That means writing about poaching."

96.

Dennis asked Don if he wanted to get a deer, join the L.C.P.A.—if I'd of ask him, he'd have been suspicious. Nancy sent along a thermos & a pecan pie. Leonard sat in the back, on the spare.

Don was to do the shooting...when Dennis shined his light across the draw, two eyes glowed like bicycle reflectors. Pointing, Dennis motioned for Don to shoot. Leonard looked away, started

laughing before Don fired....Don shot twice more, but the eyes kept looking at him. "Use my rifle," I said, handing him my .54—the muzzleloader knocked the eyes out.

Don found the plywood deer, his hits and his name pencilled between the shining eyes.

97.

"Death is a poacher," Frankie said, still with an ace of spades on his hat, his cigarette tip hidden in his hand. We sat, watching the Brown Leghorn rooster as he explored his new home. A hen lay down before him; he was on—and off. "At that pace," Frankie said, "he'll get them all before Mom's rooster knows he's here."...He didn't. Their white rooster, a Cornish Cross weighing sixteen pounds, charged across

the yard. They flew up together, hackles raised, spurs out. The Leghorn bounced off the white rooster's chest, then took off running, the bigger rooster chasing. Around the chickenhouse they raced, the Leghorn looking like a roadrunner. On the third lap, the Cornish Cross fell, gasped, and died.

98.

Showing a picture of two Newport businessmen, both with bucks (racks in velvet), Wayne said, "They got them on that ridge," pointing above his brother's cabin. "It ain't like taking something that doesn't belong to you when you live here."...I recognized both men, the younger a Jaycee, the other his father, one of Newport's city fathers. I'd joined the Jaycees

at Siletz for awhile. The good work we did was winning a gallon of whiskey for most new members. All of Lincoln County had joined some group. Rowdy mill workers were Eagles who brought strippers down from Portland. The Elks hired a croupier but denied it each time they were busted.

99.

The VFW had the best potlucks, and Bingo,
and the cemetery by Klamath Grade. One night,
rain bouncing off the pavement, lightning
struck a transformer on the curve there
by the cemetery, filling the windshield of my Bronco
with blinding whiteness & the image of the powerpole
in it...I thought I was dead, rounded the knoll,
and was almost to Twin Bridges before realizing

I wasn't. I couldn't see until I turned
onto my narrow lane, two miles from the cemetery,
The road I'd driven was the road in my memory.

I'd joined the Jaycees to see whether I belonged,
and I didn't. I couldn't afford the ten cents
each time I cursed—and my Bronco had too many dents.

100.

Wayne thought I should be an Eagle: "They're
bringing down a honey that can pick up a dollar
off the table with her cunt." We were sitting
on his front porch with our .45-70's, shooting
across the county road. At the end of his pasture
a hawk screamed as it circled away from an alder.
It climbed higher, trying to escape a gull,
but the gull, diving at the hawk, climbed till

both were specks against the sun. "I doubt
that gull's been that high before, damn near out
of sight," Wayne said, rubbing excess grease
off bullets cast last night. "She's quite a tease,
lets you touch her if the money's right,"
he added as he raised his Winchester's tang sight.

101.

I joined the volunteer fire department by accident, happened to be shooting when the siren blew that Sunday afternoon. The Fourth, most everyone along the bay watching fireworks, I ended up stringing hose from the pumper to whose ever house that was (I meant to ask; they lost everything)...We had to find the truck and fill it first. Seems someone had signed it out to wash their Cat, and left it with a dead

battery....In the years I was with the department, we never saved a house (came close a couple times). We'd showed up Tuesday evenings, compare crimes, drink a beer or two, vote on something and vent complaints about the truck, a '37 Ford that had been given to us by G.P. when they couldn't make it run.

102.

Wayne rang the washing machine, his bullet striking its tub three hundred yards away. "How about the Elks, a good place to take a lay, cheap drinks." He fired again, spilled his Blitz, and struck low. "Those bucks in velvet," I said, "would've made the book." I hit the washer ten times straight. "I know, a Moose, you're a natural," Wayne said. "And the women

they bring down put on a good show." He missed, again....Leaning against the fence, a heifer snapped a post, mooed, then lead cows & calves across the wire, onto the road & around the bend. The phone rang. It was Publishers' forester telling Wayne to come get his "fucking cows."

103.

Willie saw Frankie at the store, said, "I killed that hawk of yours, caught him after my chickens." Vern asked if that was the hawk that showed up when, every evening, he gave the geese a little something there in the park. Frankie didn't know; he overfilled his rusting, blue Toyota. Vern said, "You're gonna blow yourself up—should've let me pump that gas, Oregon law." Frankie pinched his cigarette out,

said, "Dad made us patch that hawk up." And he told how, wounding that redtail before he left for 'Nam (he hit it in a leg with his .22), his dad made him responsible for it. He'd kept it in a cardboard box, had fed it tuna fish sandwiches & green beans and had hung a dead chick around its neck till it wouldn't touch chickens.

104.

Frankie drank Blitz—busted empties—a shot each as they floated motionless in the eddy below the bridge—his ricochets cutting leaves in the maple where we parked your Pontiac. "You want me to take him home?" "He's about out of shells," Vern answered, scattering scratch for the ducks & geese. "He'll start missing pretty quick." ...I didn't know Frankie

to miss with his Browning, except the once he blocked the only path through the blackberries to an apple and a benchlegged three-point blacktail ran over the top of him. He got off one aimed shot, hit the buck in his left antler...the buck trampled him; Frankie said he was glad it wasn't a gook.

105.

I leaned against the scorched stones, felt
their roughness, like the bark of the broken tree
I'd leaned against opening morning 1960.
Thirteen, anxious to kill my first buck,
I waited, rifle ready, while a shadow knelt
for windfall apples, cracked & crunched
them; its breath harsh on the frost. Trapped
against the trunk, with bear or deer in the dark

eating apples at my feet, I dared not move,
nor could I remain still.... Two hours
until dawn—slowly, slowly, on my neck hairs
raised as I raised my Enfield, its two-groove
barrel long enough to touch my shadow;
it seemed not to know I was there with my .303.

106.

Eyes along the creek watched me as I stood
on the trestle, deciding whether to hike over
the ridge to Frankie's or go by boat upriver,
unable to read the shallows or see deadheads.

Some of the eyes belonged to newcomers, nutria
and possum. Even the small coons came from the South,
brought with saws brazed together to span old-growth,
kept in barrels with feed & feuds. The Yaquina

had neither stripers nor shad then: they came
from the Atlantic, brought west by San Francisco
sportsmen, who knew nothing about spotted owls
or spar trees. Born on an Indiana farm, I came

west when nine, lived between sawmills at Boring
and caught bass & cutthroats in an acid millpond.

107.

Headlights—a car wound through Elk City
and passed on, its tires whispering on the pavement.
Tree frogs squeaked. A mayfly, wings spent,
rested on my hand. A yip on the ridge—and a hound
howled across the river. Joined by another, lonely,
longing (I imagined) to run coon or bear,
they raised muzzles & 'owls until a rooster
crowed three times....Midnight and Abby Creek

sliding over riffles, running deep, seemed not
to go anywhere; it just was. But in my memory,
it still ran from the beaver pond to the Yaquina.
We walked the tracks, carrying daughters, about
this late on Sabbaths, returning from Salem.
It's not too late for me to return from Alaska.

108.

I saw *Sometimes a Great Notion*, and saw again
the covered bridge....Like Hank Stamper, I played
football against Florence & Mapleton, but never used
a baby bottle nipple over the muzzle of my twenty-two.
Nor would've Hank: loggers who glance at the lean
of 400-year-old fir, then stick their saws in, using
skip-tooth chain to cut faster, don't care about making
a little noise....Wild iris, columbine & camas

bloomed where we parked across the bridge; along
the creek, bear had been digging skunk cabbage roots.
Beaver had abandoned their pond; grass grew on their lodge.
In the moonlight, the hillsides belonged
to deer & bats. I ducked, slipped not wearing cork boots,
but caught my balance before falling off the lodge.

109.

I hiked up to that twisted fir faced but not
cut, the old-growth on the steep ground
above the road beyond the beaverpond.
I thought I'd pickup the rusting misery
whip that leaned against its trunk, caught
between abandoned springboards wedged
in chopped holes. You asked what happened,
why hadn't the fallers finished their cut,

did bees or bears make them quit?
I found a Skookum block chained
around its stump. Publishers had used
it for a tailhold and had left its butt
log laying like a fallen cross, still
faced, the boards not broken when it fell.

“of making many books there is no end”