

## Going Crazy

The other day I confessed to Rachel, my lovely child bride, that I felt bitter about the state of the world. I told her I felt guilty about leaving the world in this kind of condition for our children to inhabit. And I saw no remedy for our country, until the administration over-reaches, and is forced to make a correction.

She surprised me by turning on me. “Don’t talk like that,” she said. “If you become bitter, you turn against yourself. You must remain positive to be healthy. You’re no good to anyone if you’re disgusted.”

I slunk away from her, feeling wounded by her reproach. Wasn’t I just being “true,” by expressing my frustration? And what kind of person would I be if I laughed off the death of our great democracy – which is what I have a sick feeling in my stomach is what has occurred.

Last night was another installment of the Poets Against the War series here in the Twin Cities, but I stayed home. I had no appetite for righteousness these days. And I have been feeling that the poets speaking at these events need them more than the listeners.

We are sinking deep into ourselves. I was horrified by the photo of the 11 year old boy in Baghdad who had his arms blown off by a missile, and who told his doctors that if they could no give him hands he would have to take his life, because he could not live without hands.

I was thinking it was good his father was dead, because no father could bear to see that son, or hear his awful promise.

I spent the day exercising a rebus in my mind:

*In peacetime, Lord, give us respite from our anxieties.*

*In wartime, Lord, bring an end to the war.*

Last week I buried my mother, and it was a wrenching experience. She could never be really happy after the death of her daughter at 15, in 1961. That failure stuck in her throat,

and she spent much of the rest of her life punishing herself for letting it happen, and punishing everyone else for being in on it.

At the funeral service I volunteered to give the eulogy, which I took notes for on oversized index cards. But I could tell almost as soon as I started talking that it would be too much for me.

I stumbled on for about 15 minutes, outlined what I took to be the main themes of her life. But my voice kept breaking, and I felt as if I was running breathless through a forest of emotional brambles.

Finally I gave up, about eight cards short of the deck. Later, I looked at them and realized they were the antidote to the pain and misery of the other cards. On the occasion of my mother's funeral I had given her short shrift.

Last night I dreamed that somehow, in the war somewhere, my sister had been found. She had not died in 1961. She was alive, and kept apart from us all these years.

It was difficult to get to her. Someone would give me a clue, and I would follow it to a dead end, and then wait for someone else to point the way.

I never found my sister. But it comforted me to think of her cloistered away all these years, breathing, and thinking her thoughts, seeing the sun rise and set. It meant she had been able to live a life after all.

And here is the remarkable part. At one point I awakened, and looked about in the dark bedroom. There was Rachel, asleep beside me. Over on the floor, the dark shape of my dog, curled on the carpet.

Damn, I thought. Now I will never find Kathy. And closing my eyes, I retraced every step, followed every clue, until we were together at last.