

## Granddad, Waiting on Death

Granddad has been three years now  
In the nursing home waiting on death.  
Waiting in his privileged single room,  
One among the other pastel rooms  
Halled together on the ever full waiting list.

He waits in his earth bound purgatory  
For a March wind to sweep away  
His monogrammed identity card  
Clinging to the bed-wide entry door.

He fears a slow fall for his autumn leaf,  
Perhaps to be caught in the needles of the pine,  
Suspended above the litter beneath,  
Hoping for meaning in mankind's mulch,  
The dust of community.

Granddad's dust to dust  
Began with an accounting book in Iowa  
And ends with books whose malingering message  
Creeps past the muddled mind  
And parks in the vestibule of recognition.  
A thousand books after life with wife Lulu,  
An after life whose prospectus predicted no gain,  
Whose best option sought to avoid additional loses.

Fifteen years in his Bull Shoals cabin  
Watching the solitude independence solicits  
Captured in the contents of his electric frying pan.  
Then, the collage of books, pinochle, and fishing  
Collided with the accident on the highway,  
And family declared his remaining engagements  
Be moved to his son Roy's home in Ohio.

Two years in the converted den.  
At least he could read and walk the driveway.  
And there were some times  
When life's gears slid smoothly into sync  
And for a morning the smog lifted  
Revealing the corners to living.

But the den occupation ended  
With necessary plastic chair covers  
And falls in the sponge bathroom.

Roy found him a nursing home deluxe single.  
Maybe his stay would only be temporary?

He could focus on return visits,  
Days when Roy might escort him "home."  
In his mind, he cultivated these days,  
Hoped they would be on Christmas,  
For his birthday, his grandson's wedding.

Sometimes in tow with Roy,  
He could cane his baby steps through the tour.  
With his hearing aid on the dining room table  
He could collect some of what people said,  
He didn't begin to sink after the first few bites,  
He could taste the apple pie  
And know it was store bought.  
He could declare it was "Good,"  
And know he was lying.  
He knew he had told that story.....before,  
So, he wouldn't tell it.....now.

Those were the good days  
When he could still imagine himself  
Picking up the scattered sycamore twigs  
On the wide-stretched front lawn,  
Or smoking his stem-chewed pipe  
On the flagstone terrace in Spring.

But Now.....with no return,  
Granddad slides into his fourth year  
In the pre-morgue.

The books departed with his eyesight.  
Roy's visits on most days after work  
Compete in the struggle to distinguish  
The last time he was turned over  
To change his soiled pajamas.

Now there is not even an accident  
To wipe the accumulating film  
From the listless lens of life.  
The old good-day memories  
Are but floating silhouettes  
Devoid of any background.

Granddad.....  
In his luxury storage room,  
Waiting on Death.

Tom Burns  
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