

## *Paul the Wino*

Good lookin late 40's pickup parked out front of the *Cadillac Hotel*,  
fuzzy engine ticks wooing the nocturnal lapping Pacific.  
door swung wide in a warm beach breeze,  
vacant front seat's green light radio, signals not a care –  
*The Sons of the Pioneers* spillin out eternity's...  
'Cool – Clear – Wau-ter'

Passin' round a bottle with Paul and bent legged Beaté  
crouched on the studio floor of our Venice Beach storefront –  
some say, former beat-famous, *Venice West Café*  
it was obvious even then, we'd been in way over our heads that night  
*and here's our karma, Paul*

Gripping that dead, blue steel weight summoned from me just enough sense  
to reject that late-night backdoor deposit –  
but, whoever's desperate, faceless attempt shoved-in that revolver  
cracked open the back-of-the-skull world  
where – *I saw* – heaviness ooze in around Paul,  
calling all his bottles home

That's how I first met puffy blue-nosed, *Paul the Wino*  
only name any of us ever knew him by –  
best guess was some-kind-of failed exec from West Virginia  
cloaked in his ratty old grey sports coat,  
uniform of a life gone to shame

Deep shafts of descent carved by suffocating responsibility,  
or perhaps it was some disaster in the mine  
taken with blame to drink  
bein way down the ladder from bushy-browed 'ol John L.\*,  
often works out that way with coal  
or, from takin another road to Damascus

Huddled early-light, jonesin for his morning's fix  
Paul's loose magnetism of molecules  
drifts towards *Davey Jones Liquor* with affinity of the tide  
Red Mountain, Ripple, whatever does the trick –  
*bodies move... b o d i e s... m o v e \*\**

No-blood cold, on a chilly Venice morning  
*Paul the Wino* hails out - "Im goin... I'm goin!"  
clutching at his gobbler -  
spews that last graffiti on the pavement,  
his map thrown-upside out  
life's tattoos all topsy-turvy

Mind-Shaft cave-in  
corner of Ocean Front & Paloma  
Paul's morning's fare,  
followed by the slumping rumped face -  
*watch now the eyeballs' quivering curve*  
*roll back the world*

Garbage truck rumbles by  
wino's trashcan-holler,  
lookin-up through boardwalk bench  
pigeons peckin some-kinda shit off the concrete  
birds fluttering everywhere underfoot,  
searing white sand beach bright

Steppin through scatterings of birds  
tiptoeing wings... *cool*  
iridescent remembrance... *clear*  
floating - floating on... *water*  
rushing towards Horizon -  
*waiting there for me and you -*

*Cool...* (cool), *Clear...* (clear), *Wau-ter...* (water).\*\*\*

John Sturgeon ©2007

\* John L. Lewis (President of United Mine Workers of America, 1920-60)

\*\* Stuart Z. Perkoff (Venice poet, 1930-73)

\*\*\* Son's of the Pioneers ("Cool Water", 1947)