

## **I Never Loved My Father till I was an Old Man**

When I was a Child, and he, Provider,  
Outlasting dust and the Great Depression,  
Forced to leave home to find work,  
He never raised the white flag,  
And when he returned, I saw him as Intruder.

Building finished homes on empty lots,  
He sat exhausted while I pounded on the piano.  
He didn't look up.  
Just rattled his newspaper and said,  
"Let it rest."

When I was a 6', 4" teenager,  
Did he think, "What good is he?  
What use is a bean pole?"  
Was the bicycle his way of reaching out?  
He never reached out with words.

After I left home, he became  
Churchman, Deacon, Teacher,  
Gatherer of souls for the Lord, full of joy.  
Admired and respected in his church.  
Yet I never loved my father till I was an old man.

While cancer slowly ate his insides,  
Watching him on his deathbed  
I did not grieve.  
I did not understand Mortality.  
Too stupid to comprehend what was taking place.

Then, I became Provider  
For my wife, my children,  
I became Enforcer.  
"When your father gets home . . ."  
The sound echoes.

Now he lives in my mind  
In places I cannot reach.  
Silent in death, he speaks.

And in silence, I listen—and answer,  
“I love you, Provider. I love you, Papa.”