

SAINT LEO

— to gerry and ray and the spirit of the
49'er tavern, 1971-82

there were thirteen before me who made it to pope.
i didn't ask for the job, but the position became
available after i was told i have thirty months to
live. my wife gave me the title, and i have been
trying to keep her alive ever since my elevation.
for nearly two years now she has suffered nearly every
medical and mental indignity possible, including pneumonia
and a psychosomatic version of lou gehrig's disease.
whereas i have been in excellent health other than my
terminal condition.

just like joe's brain cloud, my disease has allowed me
to live like a king. when my wife and kids all suffered
colds and flu last winter, i remained in saintly health.
i now eat and drink what i like, including coffee, which
used to kill my stomach in pre-disease days.

of course, i have sacrificed my arms and legs in my rise,
and i have become the ultimate talking head, propped up
in my throne lift-chair where i bark out commands in an
ever fading voice. and when i am not understood, my voice
ascends to an insane shriek and i drool and flail about
until my balance or bent foot or itch is restored or
satisfied.

miraculously though, a calm has descended upon me that
allows me to live day to day in high spirits. i owe
this present state to the horror and angst of my
teenage years when i came face to face with death
in the works of sartre and others. also, i was not
raised a catholic. my wife, however, is irish catholic
and cannot understand my calm in the face of so much
potential suffering.

i try to get out every day in my power wheelchair, tooling
in a new-found reckless abandon up the highway to greet
people who are amazed at how well i look. and amazed
at how heroic i am, keeping up such a pleasant front.
i say, "well, i just want to have a good time."

given my wife's upbringing, she has at hand the ultimate
solution to a good time. she raised me to sainthood.
now she responds to my amorous advances, "how can you
possibly want to do it at a time like this?"

— Leo Mailman

Cape Elizabeth ME