

Appetites in the barnyard bawled for more feed than the grain bins offered, so we looked for corn to buy. Sure, one of the neighbors said, I'll sell you this round crib. So we measured the corncrib. Now what, I said. Figure the number of bushels, he said, multiply by the price You ever go to school? Yeah, I said, but in arithmetic class we papered rooms with doors and windows. His pencil flickered, area times height and divide by 2.5 equals 850 bushels. Multiply by \$2.20 -- you can do that? I nodded. He wasn't through. Two-and-a-half cubic feet for each bushel ... how many cubic feet in the world for each person? What do you mean, I asked. People, goddamit, people, how much room for people, not factories or 4-lane highways, or shopping centers, but people. Room for a guy to have a garden, a yard, a place for trees, hammock, croquet set. Man, I said, you live in the past. But not in a condominium, he said. You know what's the trouble? People don't care for people, nobody gives a damn for people, not even people. Nations stand with their britches bristling with six-shooters, glaring at each other, daring each other, who's the Bill Hickock to make the fastest draw. I wrote him a check. Glad they taught you to multiply, he said. People multiply, where can they go when mother earth finds herself layered and cross-layered with all the damn junk that takes up room. No wilderness left, not even shady backyards ... pipelines, high tension towers, blasted developers with their shoebox houses.... We will come and get the corn next week, I told him. Probably be a new airfield here by then, he muttered. I drove away. You'll see, he yelled, you'll see how much people care for people.

SMALL THORNS

The odor from garbage my neighbor
burns in a trash barrel corrupts
the fresh breath of morning and
I find the curtain of silence easily
torn at night by a barking dog, and
my taste runs to bird song early
Sunday morning rather than the blasts
from a neighbor's lawn mower and
I have never subscribed to the steel
fences built to keep kids from
homesteading vacant lots. But we
neighbors know we must bear with
each other for it is the small thorns
that prick tempers and lame the feet
of good will. Yet no one, I repeat,
no one gives us directions of how
to change things as they are.

-- James Hearst

Cedar Falls IA

THE MYSTERY OF THE MASS DROWNING
OF THE SENIOR CLASS OF HOYLE HIGH
SCHOOL HERETOFORE UNEXPLAINED
FINALLY AND CONCLUSIVELY SOLVED

But, Ma, everybody's got one

And I suppose if everybody
went and jumped into the river

Q. WHERE CAN I MEET GIRLS?

A. LAUNDROMATS ARE FULL OF THEM.

Sure enough. One makes
change. Another puts it in
for me. A third stands by
the bulletin board: FREE TO GOOD HOME.

A blonde pops out after the spin
cycle blowing delicately on my