

AFTER HOURS

John is behind the bar and Jimmy is celebrating the day after Saint Patty's and I'm celebrating the same.

Outside the locked door a guy is pounding and yelling, "Hey, let me in! I'm a friend of the owner. Let me in. I'm bleeding to death." And the other guy is yelling: "Yeah, yeah yeah. Come on."

Inside, we're drinking our beers slow and being quiet so that they don't know we're inside.

"Hey, let me in," the guy outside says.

"I'm bleeding to death. Someone kicked my ass."

"It was those big guys that were in here," I tell John.

"Yeah," he says, "those guys were assholes, but that guy out there's a bigger one."

From outside comes: "Where's your car?"

"I don't know."

"Is it that way?"

"I don't know."

They walk away.

Ten minutes later:

"Where the fuck's your car?"

"I don't know."

"Well, it ain't that way. We went that way."

"Maybe it's that way." They go away again.

Inside it's our bar and no one can get in unless we let them in.

Outside they don't know how hard it is to get out of this place.

A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION

John and I were coming back from breakfast and just as he turned his Volvo along the ocean road I remembered what I wanted to tell him.

"Remember when you used to say that if you changed your name to John Don Long Beach you could be a famous L.A. painter, like Billy Al Bengston, Laddie John Dill?"

"Sure," he said, "with an okie name you've got it made lately."

"Well, I was thinking that John Don Long Beach would be a great thing to use for a bunch of poems."

John arched his back and squinted at me. I'd written a few poems about him before and he hadn't liked them much. This was my reason for telling him about John Don Long Beach.

"Well," I said, "maybe it's a bad idea for poems anyway. Guess I won't use it." It's hard finding topics sometimes.

THE ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES

When I was a kid
we had a dog called Copper
that ran after only Cadillacs
ate tootsie rolls and ice cream sandwiches
and chased the bitches thus ending up
in jail two or three times a year.

Once the dog catcher picked him up
ten miles from home and we bailed
him out and tied him to the peach tree
in the back yard where
he howled all day
until we brought him inside
where he whimpered all night.

My father had lassoed him one day
when Copper was a pup and begging
french fries at a cafe across the street.

It was thirteen years until he died;
a hit & run. Could've killed that guy.

But thinking about Copper's exploits,
he being the Errol Flynn of the dog world,
I wonder if my similar behavior
is due to being an artist
or just a family resemblance.