

I REMEMBER

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Joe Brainard

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New York City  
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Up on a hill. In Tulsa, Oklahoma. With Ron Padgett.

I remember my first erections. I thought I had some terrible disease or something.

I remember the only time I ever saw my mother cry. I was eating apricot pie.

I remember how much I cried seeing *South Pacific* (the movie) three times.

I remember how good a glass of water can taste after a dish of ice cream.

I remember when I got a five-year pin for not missing a single morning of Sunday School for five years. (Methodist.)

I remember when I went to a "come as your favorite person" party as Marilyn Monroe.

I remember one of the first things I remember. An ice box. (As opposed to a refrigerator.)

I remember white margarine in a plastic bag. And a little package of orange powder. You put the orange powder in the bag with the margarine and you squeezed it all around until the margarine became yellow.

I remember how much I used to stutter.

I remember how much, in high school, I wanted to be handsome and popular.

I remember when, in high school, if you wore green and yellow on Thursday it meant that you were queer.

I remember when, in high school, I used to stuff a sock in my underwear.

I remember when I decided to be a minister. I don't remember when I decided not to be.

I remember the first time I saw television. Lucille Ball was taking ballet lessons.

I remember the day John Kennedy was shot.

I remember that for my fifth birthday all I wanted was an off-one-shoulder black satin evening gown. I got it. And I wore it to my birthday party.

I remember a dream I had recently where John Ashbery said that my Mondrian period paintings were even better than Mondrian.

I remember a dream I have had often of being able to fly. (Without an airplane.)

I remember many dreams of finding gold and jewels.

I remember a little boy I used to take care of after school while his mother worked. I remember how much fun it was to punish him for being bad.

I remember a dream I used to have a lot of a beautiful red and yellow and black snake in bright green grass.

I remember St. Louis when I was very young. I remember the tattoo shop next to the bus station and the two big lions in front of the Museum of Art.

I remember an American history teacher who was always threatening to jump out of the window if we didn't quiet down. (Second floor.)

I remember my first sexual experience in a subway. Some guy (I was afraid to look at him) got a hardon and was rubbing it back and forth against my arm. I got very excited and when my stop came I hurried out and home where I tried to do an oil painting using my dick as a brush.

I remember the first time I really got drunk. I painted my hands and face green with Easter egg dye and spent the night in Pat Padgett's bath tub. She was Pat Mitchell then.

I remember another early sexual experience. At the Museum of Modern Art. In the movie theater. I don't remember the movie. First there

was a knee pressed to mine. Then there was a hand on my knee. Then a hand on my crotch. Then a hand inside my pants. Inside my underwear. It was very exciting but I was afraid to look at him. He left before the movie was over and I thought he would be outside waiting for me by the print exhibition but I waited around and nobody showed any interest.

I remember when I lived in a store front next door to a meat packing house on East Sixth Street. One very fat meat packer who always ate at the same diner on the corner that I ate at followed me home and asked if he could come in and see my paintings. Once inside he instantly unzipped his blood-stained white pants and pulled out an enormous dick. He asked me to touch it and I did. As repulsive as it all was, it was exciting too, and I didn't want to hurt his feelings. But then I said I had to go out and he said, "Let's get together," and I said, "No," but he was very insistent so I said, "Yes." He was very fat and ugly and really very disgusting, so when the time came for our date I went out for a walk. But who should I run into on the street but him, all dressed up and spanking clean. I felt bad that I had to tell him that I had changed my mind. He offered me money but I said no.

I remember my parents' bridge teacher. She was very fat and very butch (cropped hair) and she was a chain smoker. She prided herself on the fact that she didn't have to carry matches around.

She lit each new cigarette from the old one. She lived in a little house behind a restaurant and lived to be very old.

I remember playing "doctor" in the closet.

I remember painting "I HATE TED BERRIGAN" in big black letters all over my white wall.

I remember throwing my eyeglasses into the ocean off the Staten Island ferry one black night in a fit of drama and depression.

I remember once when I made scratches on my face with my fingernails so people would ask me what happened, and I would say a cat did it, and, of course, they would know that a cat did not do it.

I remember the linoleum floors of my Dayton, Ohio, room. A white puffy floral design on dark red.

I remember sack dresses.

I remember when a fish-tail dress I designed was published in "Katy Keene" comics.

I remember box suits.

I remember pill box hats.

I remember round cards.

I remember squaw dresses.

I remember big fat ties with fish on them.

I remember the first ball point pens. They skipped, and deposited little balls of ink that would accumulate on the point.

I remember rainbow pads.

I remember Aunt Cleora who lived in Hollywood. Every year for Christmas she sent my brother and me a joint present of one book.

I remember the day Frank O'Hara died. I tried to do a painting somehow especially for him. (Especially good.) And it turned out awful.

I remember canasta.

I remember "How Much Is That Doggie in the Window?"

I remember butter and sugar sandwiches.

I remember Pat Boone and "Love Letters in the Sand."

I remember Teresa Brewer and "I Don't Want No Ricochet Romance."

I remember "The Tennessee Waltz."

I remember "Sixteen Tons."

I remember "The Thing."

I remember *The Hit Parade*.

I remember Dorothy Collins.

I remember Dorothy Collins' teeth.

I remember when I worked in an antique-junk shop and I sold everything cheaper than I was supposed to.

I remember when I lived in Boston reading all of Dostoevsky's novels one right after the other.

I remember (Boston) panhandling on the street where all the art galleries were.

I remember collecting cigarette butts from the urns in front of The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

I remember planning to tear page 48 out of every book I read from the Boston Public Library, but soon losing interest.

I remember Bickford's.

I remember the day Marilyn Monroe died.

I remember the first time I met Frank O'Hara. He was walking down Second Avenue. It was a cool early Spring evening, but he was wearing only a white shirt with the sleeves rolled up to his elbows. And blue jeans. And moccasins. I remember that he seemed very sissy to me. Very theatrical. Decadent. I remember that I liked him instantly.

I remember a red car coat.

I remember going to the ballet with Edwin Denby in a red car coat.

I remember learning to play bridge so I could get to know Frank O'Hara better.

I remember playing bridge with Frank O'Hara. (Mostly talk.)

I remember my grade school art teacher, Mrs. Chick, who got so mad at a boy one day she dumped a bucket of water over his head.

I remember my collection of ceramic monkeys.

I remember my brother's collection of ceramic horses.

I remember when I was a "Demolay." I wish I could remember the secret handshake so I could reveal it to you.

I remember my grandfather who didn't believe in doctors. He didn't work because he had a tumor. He played cribbage all day. And wrote poems. He had very long ugly toe nails. I avoided looking at his feet as much as I could.

I remember Moley, the local freak and notorious queer. He had a very little head that grew out of his body like a mole. No one knew him, but everyone knew who he was. He was always "around."

I remember liver.

I remember Bettina Beer. (A girl.) We used to go to dances together. I bet she was a dyke, though it never would have occurred to me at the time. She cussed a lot. And she drank and smoked with her mother's approval. She didn't have a father. She wore heavy blue eye shadow and she had white spots on her arms.

I remember riding in a bus downtown one day, in Tulsa, and a boy I knew slightly from school sat down beside me and started asking questions like "Do you like girls?" He was a real creep. When we got downtown (where all the stores are) he kept following me around until finally he talked me into going with him to his bank where he said he had something to put in his safe-deposit box. I remember that I didn't know what a safe-deposit box was. When we got

to the bank a bank man gave him his box and led us into a booth with gold curtains. The boy opened up the box and pulled out a gun. He showed it to me and I tried to be impressed and then he put it back in the box and asked me if I would unzip my pants. I said no. I remember that my knees were shaking. After we left the bank I said that I had to go to Brown-Dunkin's (Tulsa's largest department store) and he said he had to go there too. To go to the bathroom. In the men's room he tried something else (I forget exactly what) and I ran out the door and that was that. It is very strange that an eleven or twelve year old boy would have a safe-deposit box. With a gun in it. He had an older sister who was known to be "loose."

I remember Liberace.

I remember "Liberace loafers" with tassels.

I remember those bright-colored nylon seersucker shirts that you could see through.

I remember many first days of school. And ~~that~~ empty feeling.

I remember the clock from three to three-~~thirty~~.

I remember when girls wore cardigan sweaters backwards.

I remember when girls wore lots of can-can slips. It got so bad (so noisy) that the principal had to put a limit on how many could be worn. I believe the limit was three.

I remember thin gold chains with one little pearl hanging from them.

I remember mustard seed necklaces with a mustard seed inside a little glass ball.

I remember pony tails.

I remember when hoody boys wore their blue jeans so low that the principal had to put a limit on that too. I believe it was three inches below the navel.

I remember shirt collars turned up in back.

I remember Perry Como shirts. And Perry Como sweaters.

I remember duck-tails.

I remember Cherokee haircuts.

I remember no belts.

I remember many Sunday afternoon dinners of fried chicken or pot roast.

I remember my first oil painting. It was of a

chartreuse green field of grass with a little Italian village far away.

I remember when I tried out to be a cheerleader and didn't make it.

I remember many Septembers.

I remember one day in gym class when my name was called out I just couldn't say "here." I stuttered so badly that sometimes words just wouldn't come out of my mouth at all. I had to run around the field many times.

I remember a rather horsy-looking girl who tried to seduce me on a New York City roof. Although I got it up, I really didn't want to do anything, so I told her that I had a headache.

I remember one football player who wore very tight faded blue jeans, and the way he filled them.

I remember when I got drafted and had to go way downtown to take my physical. It was early in the morning. I had an egg for breakfast and I could feel it sitting there in my stomach. After roll call a man looked at me and ordered me to a different line than most of the boys were lined up at. (I had very long hair which was more unusual then than it is now.) The line I was sent to turned out to be the line to see the head doctor. (I was going to ask to see him anyway.) The

doctor asked me if I was queer and I said yes. Then he asked me what homosexual experiences I had had and I said none. (It was the truth.) And he believed me. I didn't even have to take my clothes off.

I remember a boy who told me a dirty pickle joke. It was the first clue I had as to what sex was all about.

I remember when my father would say "Keep your hands out from under the covers" as he said goodnight. But he said it in a nice way.

I remember when I thought that if you did anything bad, policemen would put you in jail.

I remember one very cold and black night on the beach alone with Frank O'Hara. He ran into the ocean naked and it scared me to death.

I remember lightning.

I remember wild red poppies in Italy.

I remember selling blood every three months on Second Avenue.

I remember a boy I once made love with and after it was all over he asked me if I believed in God.

I remember when I thought that anything old was very valuable.

I remember *Black Beauty*.

I remember when I thought that Betty Grable was beautiful.

I remember when I thought that I was a great artist.

I remember when I wanted to be rich and famous. (And I still do!)

I remember when I had a job cleaning out an old man's apartment who had died. Among his belongings was a very old photograph of a naked young boy pinned to an old pair of young boy's underwear. For many years he was the choir director at church. He had no family or relatives.

I remember a boy who worked for an undertaker after school. He was a very good tap dancer. He invited me to spend the night with him one day. His mother was divorced and somewhat of a cheap blond in appearance. I remember that his mother caught us innocently wrestling out in the yard and she got *very* mad. She told him never to do that again. I realized that something was going on that I knew nothing about. We were ten or eleven years old. I was never invited back. Years later, in high school, he caused a big scandal when a love letter he had written to another boy was found. He then quit school and worked full time for the undertaker. One day I ran into him on the street and he

started telling me about a big room with lots of beds where all the undertaker employees slept. He said that each bed had a little white tent in the morning. I excused myself and said goodbye. Several hours later I figured out what he had meant. Early morning erections.

I remember when I worked in a snack bar and how much I hated people who ordered malts.

I remember when I worked for a department store doing fashion drawings for newspaper ads.

I remember Frank O'Hara's walk. Light and sassy. With a slight bounce and a slight twist. It was a beautiful walk. Confident. "I don't care" and sometimes "I know you are looking."

I remember four Alice Esty concerts.

I remember being Santa Claus in a school play.

I remember Beverly who had a very small cross tattooed on her arm.

I remember Miss Peabody, my grade school librarian.

I remember Miss Fly, my grade school science teacher.

I remember a very poor boy who had to wear his sister's blouses to school.

I remember Easter suits.

I remember taffeta. And the way it sounded.

I remember my collection of Nova Scotia pamphlets and travel information.

I remember my collection of "Modess because . . ." magazine ads.

I remember my father's collection of arrow heads.

I remember a 1949 red Ford convertible we once had.

I remember *The Power of Positive Thinking* by Norman Vincent Peale.

I remember "four o'clocks." (A flower that closes at four.)

I remember trying to visualize my mother and father actually fucking.

I remember a cartoon of a painter painting from a naked model (back view) and on his canvas was a picture of a Parker House roll.

I remember my grandfather who lived on a

farm dunking his cornbread in his buttermilk.  
He didn't like to talk.

I remember the outhouse and a Sears and  
Roebuck catalog to wipe off with.

I remember animal smells and very cold  
water on your face in the morning.

I remember how heavy the cornbread was.

I remember crêpe paper roses. Old calen-  
dars. And cow patties.

I remember when in grade school you gave a  
valentine to every person in your class in fear  
that someone might give you one that you didn't  
have one for.

I remember when dark green walls were  
popular.

I remember driving through the Ozarks and  
all the gift shops we didn't stop at.

I remember home-room mothers.

I remember being a safety guard and wear-  
ing a white strap.

I remember "Hazel" in *The Saturday Evening  
Post*.

I remember ringworms. And name tags.

I remember always losing one glove.

I remember loafers with pennies in them.

I remember Dr. Pepper. And Royal Crown  
Cola.

I remember those brown fur pieces with lit-  
tle feet and little heads and little tails.

I remember "Suave" hair cream. (Pale  
peach.)

I remember house shoes, plaid flannel bath  
robes, and "Casper" the Friendly Ghost.

I remember pop beads.

I remember "come-as-you-are" parties.  
Everybody cheated.

I remember game rooms in basements.

I remember milkmen. Postmen. Guest tow-  
els. "Welcome" mats. And Avon ladies.

I remember driftwood lamps.

I remember reading once about a lady who  
choked to death eating a piece of steak.

I remember when fiberglass was going to solve everything.

I remember rubbing my hand under a restaurant table top and feeling all the gum.

I remember the chair I used to put my boogers behind.

I remember Pug and George and their only daughter Norma Jean who was very beautiful and died of cancer.

I remember Jim and Lucy. Jim sold insurance and Lucy taught school. Everytime we saw them they gave us a handful of plastic billfold calendars advertising insurance.

I remember Saturday night baths and Sunday morning comics.

I remember bacon and lettuce and tomato sandwiches and iced tea in the summer time.

I remember potato salad.

I remember salt on watermelon.

I remember strapless net formals in pastel colors that came down to the ankles. And carnation corsages on little short jackets.

I remember Christmas carols. And car lots.

I remember bunk beds.

I remember rummage sales. Ice cream socials. White gravy. And Hopalong Cassidy.

I remember knitted "pants" on drinking glasses.

I remember bean bag ashtrays that would stay level on irregular surfaces.

I remember shower curtains with angel fish on them.

I remember Christmas card wastebaskets.

I remember rick-rack earrings.

I remember big brass wall plates of German drinking scenes. (Made in Italy.)

I remember Tab Hunter's famous pajama party.

I remember mammy cookie jars. Tomato soup. Wax fruit. And church keys.

I remember very long gloves.

I remember a purple violin bottle that hung on the wall with ivy growing out of it.

I remember very old people when I was very young. Their houses smelled funny.

I remember on Halloween, one old lady you had to sing or dance or do something for before she would give you anything.

I remember chalk.

I remember when green blackboards were new.

I remember a backdrop of a brick wall I painted for a play. I painted each red brick in by hand. Afterwards it occurred to me that I could have just painted the whole thing red and put in the white lines.

I remember how much I tried to like Van Gogh. And how much, finally, I did like him. And how much, now, I can't stand him.

I remember a boy. He worked in a store. I spent a fortune buying things from him I didn't want. Then one day he wasn't there anymore.

I remember how sorry I felt for my father's sister. I thought that she was always on the verge of crying, when actually, she just had hay fever.

I remember the first erection I distinctly remember having. It was by the side of a public swimming pool. I was sunning on my back on a towel. I didn't know what to do, except turn over, so I turned over. But it wouldn't go away. I got a terrible sunburn. So bad that I had to go see a

doctor. I remember how much wearing a shirt hurt.

I remember the organ music from *As the World Turns*.

I remember white buck shoes with thick pink rubber soles.

I remember living rooms all one color.

I remember summer naps of no sleeping. And Kool-Aid.

I remember reading Van Gogh's letters to Theo.

I remember daydreams of dying and how ~~unhappy~~ everybody would be.

I remember daydreams of committing suicide and of the letter I would leave behind

I remember daydreams of being a dancer and being able to leap higher than anyone thought was humanly possible.

I remember daydreams of being a singer all ~~alone~~ on a big stage with no scenery, just one spotlight on me, singing my heart out, and moving my audience to total tears of love and affection.

I remember driving in cars and doing landscape paintings in my head. (I still do that.)

I remember the tiger lilies alongside the house. I found a dime among them once.

I remember a very little doll I lost under the front porch and never found.

I remember a man who came around with a pony and a cowboy hat and a camera. For so much money he would take your picture on the pony wearing the hat.

I remember the sound of the ice cream man coming.

I remember once losing my nickel in the grass before he made it to my house.

I remember that life was just as serious then as it is now.

I remember "Queers can't whistle."

I remember dust storms and yellow skies.

I remember rainy days through a window.

I remember salt shakers at the school cafeteria when the tops had been unscrewed.

I remember a job I once had sketching portraits of people at a coffee house. Table to table. During folk singing intermissions. By candlelight.

I remember when a Negro man asked me to paint a big Christmas picture to hang in his picture window at Christmas and I painted a white madonna and child.

I remember one year in school our principal was Mr. Black and my art teacher was Mrs. Black. (They were not married.)

I remember a story my mother telling of an old lady who had a china cabinet filled with beautiful antique china and stuff. One day a tornado came and knocked the cabinet over and to the floor but nothing in it got broken. Many years later she died and in her will she left my father a milk glass candy dish in the shape of a fish. (It had been in the cabinet.) At any rate, when the candy dish arrived it was all broken into many pieces. But my father glued it back together again.

I remember a big black rubber thing going over my mouth and nose just before I had my tonsils taken out. After my tonsils were taken out I remember how my throat felt eating vanilla ice cream.

I remember one morning the milkman handed me a camera. I never did understand exactly why. I'm sure it had something to do with a contest, though.

I remember Marilyn Monroe's softness in *The Misfits*.

I remember the gasoline station in the snow in *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*.

I remember when hoop skirts had a miniature revival.

I remember waking up somewhere once and there was a horse staring me in the face.

I remember sitting on top of a horse and how high up it was.

I remember a chameleon I got at the circus that was supposed to change colors each time he was on a different color, but he only changed from green to brown and from brown back to green. And it was a rather brown-green at that.

I remember never winning at bingo, though I'm sure I must have.

I remember a little girl who had a white rabbit coat and hat and muff. Actually, I don't remember the little girl. I remember the coat and the hat and the muff.

I remember radio ball game sounds coming from the garage on Saturday afternoons.

I remember hearing stories about why Johnny Ray was such an unhappy person but I can't remember what the stories were.

I remember the rumor that Dinah Shore was half Negro but that her mother never told her and so when she had a light brown baby she sued her mother for not telling her. (That she was half Negro.)

I remember my father in black-face. As an end man in a minstrel show.

I remember my father in a tutu. As a ballerina dancer in a variety show at church.

I remember Anne Kepler. She played the flute. I remember her straight shoulders. I remember her large eyes. Her slightly roman nose. And her full lips. I remember an oil painting I did of her playing the flute. Several years ago she died in a fire giving a flute concert at a children's home in Brooklyn. All the children were saved. There was something about her like white marble.

I remember people who went to church only on Easter and Christmas.

I remember cinnamon toothpicks.

I remember cherry Cokes.

I remember pastel-colored rocks that grew in water.

I remember drive-in onion rings.

I remember that the minister's son was wild.

I remember pearlized plastic toilet seats.

I remember a little boy whose father didn't believe in dancing and mixed swimming.

I remember when I told Kenward Elmslie that I could play tennis. He was looking for someone to play with and I wanted to get to know him better. I couldn't even hit the ball but I did get to know him better.

I remember when I didn't really believe in Santa Claus but I wanted to so badly that I did.

I remember when the Pepsi-Cola Company was on its last leg.

I remember when Negroes had to sit at the back of the bus.

I remember pink lemonade.

I remember paper doll twins.

I remember puffy pastel sweaters. (Angora.)

I remember drinking glasses with girls on them wearing bathing suits but when you filled them up they were naked.

I remember dark red fingernail polish almost black.

I remember that cherries were too expensive.

I remember a drunk man in a tuxedo in a bar who wanted Ron Padgett and me to go home with him but we said no and he gave us all his money.

I remember how many other magazines I had to buy in order to buy one physique magazine.

I remember a climbing red rose bush all over the garage. When rose time came it was practically solid red.

I remember a little boy down the street. Sometimes I would hide one of his toys inside my underwear and make him reach in for it.

I remember how unsexy swimming naked in gym class was.

I remember that "Negro men have giant cocks."

I remember that "Chinese men have little cocks."

I remember a girl in school one day who, just out of the blue, went into a long spiel all about how difficult it was to wash her brother's pants because he didn't wear underwear.

I remember slipping underwear into the

washer at the last minute (wet dreams) when my mother wasn't looking.

I remember a giant gold man taller than most buildings at "The Tulsa Oil Show."

I remember trying to convince my parents that not raking leaves was good for the grass.

I remember that *I* liked dandelions all over the yard.

I remember that my father scratched his balls a lot.

I remember very thin belts.

I remember James Dean and his red nylon jacket.

I remember thinking how embarrassing it must be for men in Scotland to have to wear skirts.

I remember when Scotch tape wasn't very transparent.

I remember how little your dick is, getting out of a wet bathing suit.

I remember saying "thank you" when the occasion doesn't call for it.

I remember shaking big hands.

I remember saying "thank you" in reply to "thank you" and then the other person doesn't know what to say.

I remember getting erections in school and the bell rings and how handy zipper notebooks were.

I remember zipper notebooks. I remember that girls hugged them to their breasts and that boys carried them loosely at one side.

I remember trying to make a new zipper notebook look old.

I remember never thinking Ann Miller beautiful.

I remember thinking that my mother and father were ugly naked.

I remember when I found a photograph of a woman naked from the waist up with very big tits and I showed it to a boy at school and he told the teacher about it and the teacher asked to see it and I showed it to her and she asked me where I got it and I said that I found it on the street. Nothing happened after that.

I remember peanut butter and banana sandwiches.

I remember jeweled sweaters with fur collars open to the waist.

I remember the Box Car Twins.

I remember not looking at crippled people.

I remember Mantovani and his (100 Strings?).

I remember a woman with not much neck. On her large feet she always wore bright-colored suede platform shoes. My mother said they were very expensive.

I remember corrugated ribbon that you ran across the blade of a pair of scissors and it curled all up.

I remember that I never cried in front of other people.

I remember how embarrassed I was when other children cried.

I remember the first art award I ever won. In grade school. It was a painting of a nativity scene. I remember a very large star in the sky. It won a blue ribbon at the fair.

I remember when I started smoking I wrote my parents a letter and told them so. The letter was never mentioned and I continued to smoke.

I remember how good wet dreams were.

I remember a roller coaster that went out over a lake.

I remember visions (when in bed but not asleep yet) of very big objects becoming very small and of very small objects becoming very big.

I remember seeing colors and designs by closing my eyes very tightly.

I remember Montgomery Clift in *A Place in the Sun*.

I remember bright-colored aluminum drinking glasses.

I remember "The Swing" dance.

I remember "The Chicken."

I remember "The Bop."

I remember monkeys who did modern paintings and won prizes.

I remember "I like to be able to tell what things are."

I remember "Any little kid could do that."

I remember "Well, it may be good but I just don't understand it."

I remember "I like the colors."

I remember "You couldn't give it to me."

I remember "It's interesting."

I remember Bermuda shorts and knee-length socks.

I remember the first time I saw myself in a full-length mirror wearing Bermuda shorts. I never wore them again.

I remember playing doctor with Joyce Vantries. I remember her soft white belly. Her large navel. And her little slit between her legs. I remember rubbing my ear against it.

I remember Lois Lane. And Della Street.

I remember jerking off to sexual fantasies of Troy Donahue with a dark tan in a white bathing suit down by the ocean. (From a movie with Sandra Dee.)

I remember sexual fantasies of making it with a stranger in the woods.

I remember sexual fantasies in white tile shower rooms. Hard and slippery. Abstract and steamy. Wet body to wet body. Slippery, fast, and squeaky.

I remember sexual fantasies of seducing young country boys (but old enough): Pale and blond and eager.

I remember jerking off to sexual fantasies involving John Kerr. And Montgomery Clift.

I remember a very wet dream with J. J. Mitchell in a boat.

I remember jerking off to visions of body details.

I remember navels. Torso muscles. Hands. Arms with large veins. Small feet. (I like small feet.) And muscular legs.

I remember underarms where the flesh is softer and whiter.

I remember blond heads. White teeth. Thick necks. And certain smiles.

I remember underwear. (I like underwear.) And socks.

I remember the wrinkles and creases of fabric being worn.

I remember tight white T-shirts and the gather of wrinkles from under the arms.

I remember sexual fantasies of old faded

worn and torn blue jeans and the small areas of flesh revealed. I especially remember torn back pockets with a triangle of soft white bottom showing.

I remember a not very pleasant sexual dream involving Kenward Elmslie's dog Whippoorwill.

I remember green Easter egg grass.

I remember never really believing in the Easter bunny. Or the sandman. Or the tooth fairy.

I remember bright-colored baby chickens. (Dyed.) They died very fast. Or ran away. Or something. I just remember that shortly after Easter they disappeared.

I remember farts that smell like old eggs.

I remember one very hot summer day I put ice cubes in my aquarium and all the fish died.

I remember dreams of walking down the street and suddenly realizing that I have no clothes on.

I remember a big black cat named Midnight who got so old and grouchy that my parents had him put to sleep.

I remember making a cross of two sticks for

something my brother and me buried. It might have been a cat but I think it was a bug or something.

I remember regretting things I didn't do.

I remember wishing I knew then what I know now.

I remember peach-colored evenings just before dark.

I remember "lavender past." (He has a . . .)

I remember Greyhound buses at night.

I remember wondering what the bus driver is thinking about.

I remember empty towns. Green tinted windows. And neon signs just as they go off.

I remember (I think) lavender-tinted windows on one bus.

I remember tricycles turned over on front lawns. Snowball bushes. And plastic duck families.

I remember glimpses of activity in orange windows at night.

I remember little cows.

I remember that there is always one soldier on every bus.

I remember small ugly modern churches.

I remember that I can never remember how bathroom doors in buses open.

I remember donuts and coffee. Stools. Pasted-over prices. And gray people.

I remember wondering if the person sitting across from me is queer.

I remember rainbow-colored grease spots on the pavement after a rain.

I remember undressing people (in my head) walking down the street.

I remember, in Tulsa, a red sidewalk that sparkled.

I remember being hit on the head by bird-shit two times.

I remember how exciting a glimpse of a naked person in a window is even if you don't really see anything.

I remember "Autumn Leaves."

I remember a very pretty German girl who just didn't smell good.

I remember that Eskimos kiss with their noses. (?)

I remember that the only friends my parents had who owned a swimming pool also owned a funeral parlor.

I remember laundromats at night all lit up with nobody in them.

I remember a very clean Catholic book-gift shop with practically nothing in it to buy.

I remember rearranging boxes of candy so it would look like not so much was missing.

I remember brown and white shoes with little decorative holes cut out of them.

I remember certain group gatherings that are hard to get up and leave from.

I remember alligators and quicksand in jungle movies. (Pretty scary.)

I remember opening jars that nobody else could open.

I remember making home-made ice cream.

I remember that I liked store-bought ice cream better.

I remember hospital supply store windows.

I remember stories of what hot dogs are made of.

I remember Davy Crockett hats. And Davy Crockett just about everything else.

I remember not understanding why people on the other side of the world didn't fall off.

I remember wondering why, if Jesus could cure sick people, why He didn't cure all sick people.

I remember wondering why God didn't use his powers more to end wars and stop polio. And stuff like that.

I remember "Love Me Tender."

I remember trying to realize how big the world really is.

I remember trying to figure out what it's all about. (Life.)

I remember catching lightning bugs and putting them in a jar with holes in the lid and then letting them out the next day.

I remember making clover blossom chains.

I remember in Boston a portrait of Isabella Gardner by Whistler.

I remember in Tulsa my first one-man show of brush and ink drawings of old fashioned

children. They were so intricate and fine that nobody could believe that I did them with a brush. But I did.

I remember winning a Peter Pan Coloring Contest and getting a free pass to the movies for a year.

I remember Bunny Van Valkenburg. She had a little nose. A low hairline. And two big front teeth. She was my girlfriend for several years when we were very young. Later on, in high school, she turned into quite a sex-pot.

I remember Bunny Van Valkenburg's mother Betty. She was short and dumpy and bubbly and she wore giant earrings. Once she wallpapered her kitchen floor with wallpaper. Then shellacked it.

I remember Bunny Van Valkenburg's father Doc. He was our family doctor. I remember him telling of a patient he had who got poison ivy inside his body. The man was in total misery but it healed very fast because there was no way that he could scratch it.

I remember that the Van Valkenburgs had more money than we did.

I remember in grade school tying a mirror to your shoe and casually slipping it between a girl's

legs during conversation. Other boys did that. I didn't.

I remember eating tunnels and cities out of watermelon.

I remember how sad *The Jane Froman Story* was.

I remember George Evelyn who had a red and white face because of an explosion he was in once. And his wife Jane who wore green a lot and laughed very loud. I remember their only son George Junior who was my age. He was very fat and very wild. But I hear that he settled down, got married, and is active in church.

I remember the first time I saw Elvis Presley. It was on *The Ed Sullivan Show*.

I remember "Blue Suede Shoes." And I remember having a pair.

I remember felt skirts with cut-out felt poodles on them. Sometimes their collars were jeweled.

I remember bright orange canned peaches.

I remember jeweled bottle openers.

I remember the horse lady at the fair. She didn't look like a horse at all.

I remember pillow fights.

I remember being surprised at how yellow and how red autumn *really* is.

I remember chain letters.

I remember Peter Pan collars.

I remember mistletoe.

I remember Judy Garland singing "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" (so sad) in *Meet Me in St. Louis*.

I remember Judy Garland's red shoes in *The Wizard of Oz*.

I remember Christmas tree lights reflected on the ceiling.

I remember Christmas cards arriving from people my parents forgot to send Christmas cards to.

I remember the Millers who lived next door. Mrs. Miller was an Indian and Mr. Miller was a radio ham. They had five children and a very little house. There was always junk all over their yard. And inside the house too. Their living room was completely taken up by a big green ping pong table.

I remember taking out the garbage.

I remember "the Ritz" movie theater. It was full of statues and the ceiling was like a sky at night with twinkling stars.

I remember wax paper.

I remember what-not shelves of two overlapping squares. One higher than the other.

I remember ballerina figurines from Japan with real net-like tutus.

I remember chambray work shirts. And dirty tennis shoes with no socks.

I remember wood carvings of funny doctors.

I remember the "T-zone." (Camel cigarettes.)

I remember big brown radios.

I remember long skinny colored glass decanters from Italy.

I remember fishnet.

I remember board and brick bookshelves.

I remember bongo drums.

I remember candles in wine bottles.

I remember one brick wall and three white walls.

I remember the first time I saw the ocean. I jumped right in, and it swept me right under, down, and back to shore again.

I remember being disappointed in Europe ~~that~~ I didn't *feel* any different.

I remember when Ron Padgett and I first arrived in New York City we told a cab driver to take us to the Village. He said, "Where?" And we said, "To the Village." He said, "But where in the Village?" And we said, "Anywhere." He took us to Sixth Avenue and 8th Street. I was pretty disappointed. I thought that the Village would be like a real village. Like my vision of Europe.

I remember putting on sun tan oil and having the sun go away.

I remember Dorothy Kilgallen's face.

I remember toreador pants.

I remember a babyblue matching skirt and sweater that Suzy Barnes always wore. She was interested in science. All over her walls were advertising matchbook covers hanging on rolls of string. She had a great stamp collection too. Her mother and father were both over six feet tall. They belonged to a club for people over six feet tall only.

I remember doing other things with straws besides drinking through them.

I remember an ice cream parlor in Tulsa that had a thing called a pig's dinner. It was like a very big banana split in a wooden dish made to look like a pig's trough. If you ate it all they gave you a certificate saying that you ate it all.

I remember after people are gone thinking of things I should have said but didn't.

I remember how much rock and roll music can hurt. It can be so free and sexy when you are not.

I remember Royla Cochran. She lived in an attic and made long skinny people out of wax. She was married to a poet with only one arm until he died. He died, she said, from a pain in the arm that wasn't there.

I remember eating alone in restaurants a lot because of some sort of perverse pleasure I don't want to think about right now. (Because I still do it.)

I remember the first escalator in Tulsa. In a bank. I remember riding up and down it. And up and down it.

I remember drawing pictures in church on pledge envelopes and programs.

I remember having a casual chat with God every night and usually falling asleep before I said, "Amen."

I remember the great girl-love of my life. We were both the same age but she was too old and I was too young. Her name was Marilyn Mounts. She had a small and somehow very vulnerable neck. It was a long thin neck, but soft. It looked like it would break very easily.

I remember Sen-Sen: Little black squares that taste like soap.

I remember that little jerk you give just before you fall asleep. Like falling.

I remember when I won a scholarship to the Dayton, Ohio, Art Institute and I didn't like it but I didn't want to hurt their feelings by just quitting so I told them that my father was dying of cancer.

I remember in Dayton, Ohio, the art fair in the park where they made me take down all my naked self-portraits.

I remember a middle-aged lady who ran an antique shop in the Village. She asked me to come over and fix her bathroom late at night but she wouldn't say what was wrong with it. I said yes because saying no has always been difficult for me. But the night I was to go I just didn't go. The antique shop isn't there anymore.

I remember how disappointing going to bed with one of the most beautiful boys I have ever seen was.

I remember jumping off the front porch head first onto the corner of a brick. I remember being able to see nothing but gushing red blood. This is one of the first things I remember. And I have a scar to prove it.

I remember white bread and tearing off the crust and rolling the middle part up into a ball and eating it.

I remember toe jams. I never ate toe jams but I remember kids that did. I *do* remember eating snot. It tasted pretty good.

I remember dingle berries.

I remember rings around your neck. (Dirt.)

I remember thinking once that flushing away pee might be a big waste. I remember thinking that pee is probably good for something and that if one could just discover what it was good for one could make a mint.

I remember staying in the bathtub too long and having wrinkled toes and fingers.

I remember "that" feeling, cleaning out your navel.

I remember pouring out a glass of water (I was a fountain) in a front porch musical production of "Strolling through the Park One Day."

I remember tying two bicycles together for a production number of "Bicycle Built for Two."

I remember a store we had where we bought stuff at the five and ten and then re-sold the stuff for a penny or two more than it cost. And then with the money we bought more stuff. Etc. We ended up by making several dollars clear.

I remember paying a dime and getting a red paper poppy made by people in wheelchairs.

I remember little red feathers. That, I think, was the Red Cross.

I remember making tents on the front porch on rainy days.

I remember wanting to sleep out in the backyard and being kidded about how I wouldn't last the night and sleeping outside and not lasting the night.

I remember a story about my mother finding a rat walking all over my brother's face while he was sleeping. Before I was born.

I remember a story about how when I was very young I got a pair of scissors and cut all my

curls off because a boy down the street told me that curls were sissy.

I remember when I was very young saying "hubba-hubba" whenever I saw a red-headed lady because my father liked redheads and it was always good for a laugh.

I remember that my mother's favorite movie star was June Allyson.

I remember that my father's favorite movie star was Rita Hayworth.

I remember being Joseph in a live nativity scene (that didn't move) in a park. You just had to stand there for half an hour and then another Joseph came and you had a cup of hot chocolate until your turn came again.

I remember taking a test to see which musical instrument I would be best suited for. They said it was the clarinet so I got a clarinet and took lessons but I was terrible at it so I stopped.

I remember trying to convince Ron Padgett that I didn't believe in God anymore but he wouldn't believe me. We were in the back of a truck. I don't remember why.

I remember buying things that were too expensive because I didn't like to ask the price of things.

I remember a spooky job I had once cleaning up a dentist's office after everyone had gone home. I had my own key. The only part I liked was straightening up the magazines in the waiting room. I saved it as the last thing to do.

I remember "Revlon." And that ex-Miss America lady.

I remember wondering why, since I am queer, I wouldn't rather be a girl.

I remember trying to devise something with a wet sponge in a glass to jerk off into but it didn't quite work out.

I remember trying to blow myself once but I couldn't quite do it.

I remember optical illusions when lying face down and arms folded over my head in the sun of big eyebrows (magnified) and of two overlapping noses. (Also magnified.)

I remember getting rid of everything I owned on two occasions.

I remember wondering if my older brother is queer too.

I remember that I was a terrible coin collector because I was always spending them.

I remember gray-silver pennies. (Where did they go?)

I remember "Ace" combs.

I remember "Dixie" drinking cups. And "Bond" bread.

I remember the "Breck" shampoo ladies.

I remember the skinny guy who gets sand kicked in his face in body-building advertisements.

I remember blonde women who get so much sun you can't see them.

I remember being disappointed the first time I got my teeth cleaned that they didn't turn out real white.

I remember trying to visualize what my insides looked like.

I remember people who like to look you straight in the eye for a long time as though you have some sort of mutual understanding about something.

I remember *almost* sending away for body building courses many times.

I remember bright orange light coming into rooms in the late afternoon. Horizontally.

I remember the \$64,000 *Question* scandal.

I remember that woman who was always opening refrigerators.

I remember light blue morning glories on the fence in the morning. Morning glories always surprise me. I never really expect them to be there.

I remember miniature loaves of real bread the Bond Bread Company gave you when you went on a tour of their plant.

I remember stories about bodies being chopped up and disposed of in garbage disposals.

I remember stories about razor blades being hidden in apples at Halloween. And pins and needles in popcorn balls.

I remember stories about what goes on in restaurant kitchens. Like spitting in the soup. And jerking off in the salad.

I remember a story about a couple who owned a diner. The husband murdered his wife and ground her up in the hamburger meat. Then one day a man was eating a hamburger at the diner and he came across a piece of her finger-mail. That's how the husband got caught.

I remember that Lana Turner was discovered sipping a soda in a drugstore.

I remember that Rock Hudson was a truck driver.

I remember that Betty Grable didn't smoke or drink or go to Hollywood parties.

I remember a ringworm epidemic and being scared to death that I would get it. If you got it they shaved off your hair and put green stuff all over your scalp.

I remember drinking fountains that start out real low and when you put your face down they spurt way up into your nose.

I remember my grade school librarian Miss Peabody. At the beginning of each class we had to all say in unison "Good morning, Miss Peabody!" Only instead we said "Good morning, Miss *Pee*-body!" I guess she decided to ignore this because she never said anything about it. She was very tall and very thin and there was always a ribbon or a scarf tied around her head from which bubbled lots of silver-gray curls.

I remember in gym class during baseball season certain ways of avoiding having to go to bat.

I remember on "free day" in gym class usually picking stilts.

I remember "Your shirt tail's on fire!" and then you yank it out and say "Now it's out!"

I remember "Your front door is open." Or maybe it was "Barn door." Or both.

I remember "bathroom stationery."

I remember being embarrassed to buy toilet paper at the corner store unless there were several other things to buy too.

I remember a joke about Tom, Dick, and Harry that ended up, "Tom's dick is hairy."

I remember "sick" jokes.

I remember Mary Anne jokes.

I remember "Mommy, Mommy, I don't like my little brother." "Shut up, Mary Anne, and eat what I tell you to!" (That's a Mary Anne joke.)

I remember once having to take a pee sample to the doctor and how yellow and warm it was in a jar.

I remember socks that won't stay up.

I remember the little boy with the very deep voice in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. (Like a frog.)

I remember a red velvet swing in a movie called *The Red Velvet Swing*.

I remember having to pull down my pants

once to show the doctor my dick. It was all red and swollen. A solid mass of chigger bites. (Pretty embarrassing.)

I remember wondering why anyone would want to be a doctor, and I still do.

I remember always getting in trouble for giving everything away.

I remember *really* getting in trouble once for trading a lot of expensive toys for a rock and a pocket knife.

I remember a girl in grade school who had shiny legs that were cracked like a Chinese vase.

I remember burying some things in the dirt once thinking that someday someone would find them and it would be a great surprise but a few days later I dug them up myself.

I remember when Lenox China had an essay contest in connection with a local store that carried Lenox China. Whoever wrote the best essay about Lenox China was supposed to get a free place setting of their choice but I don't remember anyone winning. I think somehow the contest got dropped.

I remember square dancing and "The Texas Star."

I remember an old royal blue taffeta formal my little sister had for playing dress-up in and I remember dressing up in it.

I remember "hand-me-downs."

I remember pig-latin.

I remember reading twelve books every summer so as to get a "certificate" from the local library. I didn't give a shit about reading but I loved getting certificates. I remember picking books with big print and lots of pictures.

I remember earaches. Cotton. And hot oil.

I remember not liking mashed potatoes if there was a single lump in them.

I remember *Howdy Doody* and *Queen for a Day*.

I remember taking an I.Q. test and coming out below average. (I've never told anybody that before.)

I remember pedal-pushers.

I remember thinking about whether or not one should kill flies.

I remember giving myself two or three wishes and trying to figure out what they would be.