

11/20/17

Dear Archie, today
I drove past 606 Hanshaw Road
where you haven't lived
since 1993, and where

you had green shutters
the currant occupants
have maroon ones. Yours
were better. You left us

in February 2001, a week before
you would have turned seventy-five.
I thought of your coil
of tape for the turn

of the year while I was driving
and listening to the radio
and deciding I would write
this poem to you, old friend,

now that I'm the age you were
when we edited a book together
and you were so much older than
than I. If you were here you

would ask me what about
the radio enchants me so much?
Its randomness, I would say.
Someone else is choosing

the order, the sequence
which may never cohere into sense,
but the day is like that,
it gives you what it has

and lets you arrange it
and sometimes you luck into
Sinatra singing “The Song Is You”
arranged by Billy May in 1958

and you understand that, Archie,
you remember the phone call
when I sang “it seems to me I’ve heard
that song before” and you sang

back “it’s from an old familiar score”
you knew all the words
and reminded me that
you didn’t have a radio in your Toyota (which

I can still see in your driveway) but
you didn’t need a radio,
because you had
a very entertaining mind.

11/21/17

ON COLEMAN HAWKINS'S BIRTHDAY

It's November 21
Tomorrow JFK will get assassinated
the late Hoagy Carmichael, born on the 22nd
in 1899, will play
"Among My Souvenirs"
in *The Best Years of our Lives*,
and Matthew Zapruder will turn fifty

But today,
today I take my Audi out for a spin
across various bridges
spanning the gorges of Ithaca
under a brilliant blue sky
darkening as I drive
and continuing to do so
after I step out of the car
and onto my favorite perch
above Cayuga's waters, the porch
where majestic trees devoid of leaves
stand like scarecrows
the sky a deeper hue an orange
and blue blaze dipping
below the horizon

The car radio is on
Sirius 71
and my mind wanders
I think how brilliant the bridges are
in "Isn't This a Lovely Day"
(Irving Berlin) and "Can't Help

Lovin' That Man of Mine" (Jerome Kern, who also wrote the music for "The Way You Look Tonight")

And that ("The Way You Look Tonight") is playing on the kitchen radio right now with Coleman Hawkins on tenor sax (whose birthday is today) and tremendous sidemen Max Roach, Milt Jackson, et al, so WKCR is doing all Hawkins all day as they have done since the Johnson administration (Lyndon, not Andrew)

And now I am nursing my Gibson with gin from a Chicago distillery having made a sidecar for Stacey and had a quiet moment with Dean Martin "Under the Bridges" and Keely Smith can't think of anything I'd rather do

11/22/17

A good day for a drive to the country
underneath the apple tree with Carmen McRae
proving you can sing and talk at the same time
“and hear the bluebirds sing” she sings as if
there were a hyphen separating “blue” from “birds”
and we “shoot up” with summertime