

MY CONCEPTION OF ME

Starting with ... and Stating the obvious ...

I'm overweight,
Old,
Gray-haired,
Balding,
And not a fashionable dresser.

Not so obvious is – I don't care.
Corcoran males tend not to live long.
It's a tradition ... of sorts ... or, just a fact, really.
Whatever it is, it means I'm a ticking bomb.
And when you're on a short fuse, there isn't much to care about.

Thing is, I've been on a short fuse,
Of my own making,
Most of my life.

I decided in grammar school,
Maybe 10-years-old or so,
That the world would end in 1960.
It didn't – obviously –
But for a couple of years
I was blissfully unaware of all the important stuff
10-year-olds were supposed to be concerned about.

The teenage years were tougher.
I ducked some of the insanity in a seminary,
a monastery, really – cloistered away from it all.
Then *somewhat successfully* hid out in an all-boys school until college.
A few heavy hits to my self-esteem,
all related to girls,
But I learned early on that staying out of the pool
Lessened one's chances of drowning.
Then college ... which darn near killed me.
- There was the inane: maroon and navy sweaters, blazers, weejuns, and
smelly aftershave.
- The sexual and academic ... pretty much a disaster
- The financial ... 7 bucks a week, and all the pocket change
an unskilled, untrained, inexperienced,
socially-backward recluse could muster. No, no money either.

What saved me, honestly,
Was the draft.
Yeah ... I was drafted in 1969.
And the notion was,
 in my mind at least,
 that I was likely never coming back.
 Seriously. 55,000 of us were killed.
 Some 500,000 more wounded,
 physically and/or emotionally maimed,
 Kids, mostly.
 What a waste ...!

It saved me in this sense ...
 I didn't have to worry about dating ...
 Didn't have to worry about having a girlfriend
 Or a job
 Or dressing in anything other than olive drab.
 Oh, I hated it,
 Sure,
 I didn't like being scared,
 Or having to put up **so often** with **so much** stupidity,
 Yet the ludicrous,
 Mind-numbing
 Anonymity of it all
 Was,
 In its own way,
 A blessing.

And I never got over it.
To this day,
 Even as I stand – or sit - here before you,
 I am incredibly aware
 Of the possibility
 That this moment may be my last.

Now, that's not a macabre thought.
Not at all.
On the contrary,
 It's liberating.
 A tonic for a worried mind.
 Absolution for a troubled soul.
 An elixir which eases the angst of living.

And that's my conception of me –
 Blissfully, blessedly, basically, a dead man walking.
 And I'm kind-of loving it.