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Retiring Ol' Gray

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RETIRING OL' GRAY

"Tailor-made," we'd say
each time the chutegate cracked
and she'd buck honest—
a jump-and-kick, rocking chair
bronc, not a "dirty" in her,
not a single swoop
or duck: "no mallards,"
we'd laugh. This old campaigner
taught us heart, those moments
she'd hang high
enough for us to dream
fancy filagree and ruby
inlays on the sun—that gold
buckle to win Cheyenne, like heaven,
Daddy Of Them All.

Damnit, I'll always crave
her acrobatic kick
to kiss the earth—
the way she'd break in two,
come up again for air
and float: back to back
we'd take wing, my high
spurring stroke lifting
and lifting her, horizon
to horizon—an anxious bird
soaring to love
every inch of sky
and uproar of clouds
going stark-raving
wild in a crowd.