

Spring 1983

## Transcript from Memorial Service

John Mitchell

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

---

### Recommended Citation

Mitchell, John (1983) "Transcript from Memorial Service," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 20 , Article 9.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss20/9>

This Prose is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in CutBank by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@mso.umt.edu](mailto:scholarworks@mso.umt.edu).

I'm John Mitchell. I've known Dick about forty-five years. (We're kinda even: you don't know what I'm gonna say, and I don't either. I'm just gonna kinda take off from what the other people said.)

Hugo was so damn honest, it wasn't even right. He *should* have been a little flaky. But right after the war, Dick was at a party. He was taking my sister home and he ran the Model A over a railroad track. Dick never turned the wheel, he always leaned. So the car went over the railroad track and the cops came and they threw old Dick in the slammer. So we all went to the trial. There was this guy in his paints, great war record, and there was a judge—Judge DeGrief—who hated everybody. That was his name—terrible reputation—and the prosecutor, and there sits Dick. Dick's posture was not very good. . . . he kinda rolled his shoulders over . . . but he had this nice uniform, great war record, and for some reason they took his side. And I remember the judge saying, "Well, you didn't have too much, did you?" And Hugo says, "Oh, yeah. Boy, was I loaded." And the prosecutor says, "Hey, son, y'know . . . did you have coffee? Did you try to sober up before you left?" "Hell, no," Dick says. So that's how honest he was. Too damn honest.

I knew him . . . oh, I probably knew him as well as anybody. . . . This ain't easy . . . well, anyway, I think that if Dick wanted me to do something . . . would be to probably take my tie off first. You know, Dick was—and I don't mean to slight anybody when I tell this story—but Dick was raised by his grandparents. And the longest paragraph I ever heard Grandpa say was when he had his fiftieth wedding anniversary, I congratulated him, and he went on to say, "I'm gonna keep her." And that was the most I ever heard. But anyway, when Dick was eighteen, finished high school, they moved him out. Not because they didn't love him, but that's what you did. So he came and he lived with me at my house. And then he went in the war, and came back, went to school, and his education in becoming a poet reminds me of one time I used to halibut fish, and I was going down to the dock and there was a guy about a hundred-and-twelve pounds with a railroad watch and he's leaning on a boat, seventy-six foot boat, and he had painted down to the dock line. And then he needed to get the boat away and pull a camel in and then get on a platform and paint to the water line. His name was Nels Lee. And I came down to the dock and I says, "Nels, what in the hell are you doin'?" And he says, "Well, I'm gonna move this boat." And he's a tough Norwegian, I'll tell ya. I

*John Mitchell*

says, "You ain't gonna move that boat." And he says, "Yes, I am. If I shove hard enough and long enough, it'll move." And Dick did that with his poetry and his education. He shoved hard and long, and he moved it.

*Transcript from Memorial Service in Missoula  
October 31, 1982*