

Fall 1986

After the Noise of Saigon

Walter McDonald

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

McDonald, Walter (1986) "After the Noise of Saigon," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 27 , Article 26.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss27/26>

This Poetry 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.

After the Noise of Saigon

Spinning his wheelchair, he'd rise up
suddenly for air and fall back,
yelling old-fashioned gospel songs
to keep him human. No one loved noise

like Cousin Billy, deaf and crippled
in the war. He kept radios blasting
in all rooms, on different stations,
a battle of empty decibels. I turned them

down so I could hear, but found them
twisted loud when I came back
with lineament and magazines, items
he scribbled on a list. He kept pistols

on each window ledge, sat up some nights
alone in moonlight, the best hunter I knew
before the war. He shot coyotes from his room,
and rattlers, wild turkeys and skunks

fool enough to waddle close. At dawn
he wheeled outside and cleaned whatever
he could eat, jerking the wheels in ruts.
He hated rain, sticking in mud and falling,

singing *Help*, yelling *On Jordan's*
Stormy Banks I Stand, cursing and crying.
I'd find him outside, or naked in the tub
scrubbing blood from the chair, his shoulders

bulging. I lined up dates with girls he knew,
nothing but songs and bullets on his mind
after the noise of Saigon, cursing
game shows on TV, radar and weather charts

all he would watch, shoving inside the room
to see the maps, the rise and fall
of the jet stream, the stalled squall lines,
the highs and lows of regions under siege.

Walter McDonald