Fall 1986

After the Noise of Saigon

Walter McDonald

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

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

Part of the Creative Writing Commons

Recommended Citation

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