1968

Sitting On Cannon Square When Young

Thomas Hughes
St. John Fisher College

How has open access to Fisher Digital Publications benefited you?

Follow this and additional works at: http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle

Part of the Creative Writing Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol1968/iss1/23

This document is posted at http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol1968/iss1/23 and is brought to you for free and open access by Fisher Digital Publications at St. John Fisher College. For more information, please contact fisherpub@sjfc.edu.
Sitting On Cannon Square When Young

Cover Page Footnote
Appeared in the issue: 1968.

This poem is available in The Angle: http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol1968/iss1/23
FOR TOM WAY
KILLED VIETNAM, OCTOBER '67

JIM MAYS

The spoken
and unspoken "whys"
will not be answered...

To men:
Death is never timely...

In battle... and violent...
and pulling the full flush of youth,
it stirs the sensitive,
ridicules the statesmen
oppresses the philosopher
strains the theologian
confounds the scientist,
mocks the smiling promise
of a youthtime given to lights,
stifles with all-conquering darkness
a youthtime given to lights...
... and joy...
... and hope.

And yet:
how better bear
the burden of penultimate despair
than summon Him
whose death seized ultimate hope,
whose symbols all
proclaim
that death's not all
nor life... here...

To Him:
Death is never untimely!

SITTING ON CANNON SQUARE WHEN YOUNG

We are all turning khaki green
from washing our clothes in red cross puddles
and smashing scientific paratroopers
with memorial mounds of chocolate éclairs

We are all turning khaki green
from cutting naked army mess lines
from playing taps on civilian coat hangers
and thinking soldiers are only stunted men
in summer reruns of gunsmoke.

We are all turning khaki green
from an undeserved state of Kill
from an unawashed G.I. bill
and sweating alcoholic history
in antiseptic volumes of suburban libraries

We are all turning khaki green
from pulling dead tons of exagaguated votes
from singling the pigeon of conscience
and cooling our tired feet
in a bucket of programmed poker cards.

We warm our hands in our armpits
waking up stung from a wet dream of peace
asking with our dark eyes
to the G.I. Joe
when his black hand will freeze the air.

We warm our hands in our armpits
starting in horror through reflecting windows
asking with our dark eyes
to the G.I. Joe
when he will send his soggy package of care.

We warm our hands in our armpits
we gather our shrinking skin
we wait
we wait on the omnipresent rattle of natural enemies
we wait for the homecoming of a wasted generation
we wait for generals to melt their stars
and recast a cannon plaque to:
...his reign was mild.

All war hero museums
should be treated as jealous cronies
and drowned in ten cent comic books.

Thomas Hughes

Joe Ruffino