

Steve Ricci

Bob

I first met Bob in 1963 as we were beginning our freshman year at Tufts College of Engineering. The workload was heavy but Bob really wasn't ready to buckle down, he was unclear as to what he wanted to do. A "gap" year wasn't yet in vogue and would have been risky as the draft boards were filling ranks for the war in Vietnam. Bob came back the next year and gave it a second try but eventually withdrew and this time was sucked into the war serving two tours of combat duty. (We wrote each other nearly every week of those two years.) When he returned, the toll on him, like for so many, was below the surface.

In our early years I often thought of Bob as the Grasshopper in the fairy tale of the "Grasshopper and the Ant", playing his fiddle through the warm summer months while the ants toiled to provide for the lean cold winter. He was a music man. Put on a record or turn on a radio and he was ready to dance. On one visit to our home when our grandson was a toddler Bob began singing "Pony Boy" while bouncing little Mark on his foot; eleven years later Mark still smiles and answers to Pony Boy.

As time has passed, I appreciate more and more the need for "grasshoppers" to lighten all our loads and raise our spirits no matter what is in-front of us. That was Bob's role wherever he might be. His song, humor and joy for life were remarkable and I will certainly miss him. Bassè, Bob

These poems resonate to me as I reflect on my now departed friend.

Steve Ricci

Minstrel Man

Langston Hughes

Because my mouth
Is wide with laughter
And my throat
Is deep with song,
You do not think
I suffer after
I have held my pain so long?
Because my mouth is wide with laughter
You do not hear my inner cry?
Because my feet are gay with dancing
You do not know I die?

The Dark Hills

Edwin Arlington Robinson

Dark hills at evening in the west,
Where sunset hovers like a sound
Of golden horns that sang to rest
Old bones of warriors under ground,
Far now from all the bannered ways
Where flash the legions of the sun,
You fade – as if the last of days
Were fading, and all wars were done.