

MEMORIES OF MY FATHER

My father died when I was five
but so strong the memories.....
He, Red Rider; me Little Beaver
stepping through the giant pages
of an opened storybook.

I'm peeking into the bathroom
that connects our bedrooms.
I see him tall and strong
shaving with a straight razor.

I hop out of bed to join him
in our morning game of cowboys.
He is Red Rider (known as a "peaceable man")
and I am his sidekick Little Beaver.
He comments on the Black Hats
who have been rustling cattle over yonder
and a plan to catch 'em and rope 'em up.
My answer is always "You Betchum"
which is all Little Beaver ever said
in the Saturday matinees.

We're around our dining room table,
he's teaching us to play poker while
Mommy is at the Wednesday Night Bingo.
We use crisp round pretzels for chips
and, of course, get to eat our winnings.

I'm running into our bungalow house crying:
"The neighborhood bully threatened me."
"Go out there and kick him in the shins".
"You betchum".
That bully never messed with me again!

I see the doctor coming on his weekly
visit, black bag in hand.
Daddy introduces me as "Nurse Jones"
and the good doc plays along.
I use my toy Doctor's Kit,
probably as effective as the real one.

Sometimes I wonder how it would be if he had lived.

Would we have stayed so close or would we
have clashed and argued, since everyone tells me
I'm the most like him.

But, alas, that wasn't the case
and I think I prefer the memory
that lingers in my heart
of the strong Red Rider (a "peaceable man")
who, along with my childhood
rode off into the sunset much too soon.