

Tom Wayman

Alps Alturas: Sixty

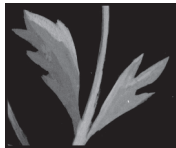
On a scree slope in the Goat Range
my boots spool a trail rock by rock
into the first decade of my life
I dread the finish of. At the start
I climbed through dense conifers and brush
gradually thinning to subalpine
meadows, August-scattered with Indian paintbrush,
aster, even late-flowering lupine
amid islands of diminutive spires of fir
and Engelmann spruce, the open places among the ridges
traversed by small creeks
and by stone beds of runoff watercourses,
dry at this season. I and my companions
descended, crossed, switchbacked up from
these angled fields
with eyes constantly scrutinizing the hillsides, our party
shouting and talking so as not to startle the unseen
powers, our blown whistles
occasionally answered by a pika's squeak,
a marmot's echo.

The day
plodded up through cols
and along ridges, until I cleared the treeline, my pack
heavier with each rise, worked around a massive boulder
and out onto scree.

Far down the rockslide
beneath my legs, a miniature canyon

proffers spoon tarns, sustained from the threads of
waterfalls on the face of Mount Inverness
opposite my perch. To the northern, eastern, southern
distances, range beyond range retreats
into lightening tones of blue.

But my route leads
a different way: my body sturdy with a long summer's
tasks and pleasures
hoists my feet and swings them. No place to turn
on this track
that bears me stone by stone
toward a snow-locked lake, around whose shore
nothing is made by hands.



Tom Wayman

Richard Meissenheimer (1947-2006)

They lowered him into Valley earth
One August afternoon. After thirty-two years
Amid these streams, the rocky soil, the houses under the peaks,
His hands and wit

Will remain forever. A careful mechanic,
He knew how to assess fuel systems, when to coax
A reluctant alternator, when to hammer loose
A brake drum, when to rebuild, to weld,

To abandon. He never ceased to learn more
As the specs continually changed.
I wish I'd been a doctor,
He said. *Then I only would have to be familiar*

With two models.
He studied people closely as their cars,
A connoisseur of absurdities in either case
But never entirely dismissing hope

Concerning his neighbors. He sparked the unionization
Of a muffler shop where he worked in town
Though they laid him off for the deed. He helped organize
Volunteer fire departments

Along the Valley highway, served nine years as local chief
Then was pushed out by a district official
Who was a friend of neither justice nor safety.
The hands that kept us moving, the willingness to serve

