



Douglas Collura

Practical Goals Make All the Difference

A bunch of us were sick and tired of weighing ourselves down with unrealistic goals. It was disheartening and lowered our sense of self worth. So we asked ourselves: What kind of goal could we set that we'd definitely be able to realize? That's when we formed the Society for Achieving Death without Dignity, or S.A.D.D. We knew we could do that. Almost everybody dies without dignity. How hard could it be? It gave us a real sense of control over our lives. Soon enough, we were carrying ourselves with a lot more pride. We could feel ourselves kissed by the stars that we can't actually see because we live in the city. We were proud and happy and knew we'd stay that way, right up until the period when we started to actually die without dignity. That promised to be a less joyful time.

The Widow Who Was Thrown out of the Congressional Gallery

*Based on Barbara Sherwood's
Speech to HUAC, 1957*

Members of the Committee, congratulations. You have inspired a man of radical optimism to step off a chair. A scientist who thought he'd found a relationship between cancer and schizophrenia. It would have taken a lifetime to be sure. You have saved him from the embarrassment of perhaps being wrong. You have made it a crime to dream of a better world. You can go home now. You can hunker down by the fire. Our children must leave idealism in the cradle. Mine have seen their father's heels dangling in the air.

I Make It Right with Everyone

I have regrets about the way I've treated some of you. You know who you are. I acted cruelly, selfishly. I had my reasons, but they didn't justify my actions. I probably just wanted to hurt someone. However, I've thought about all of it, if not long and hard, at least sporadically and decisively, in good conscience given the limits of my conscience, and what I want to tell you is this: I forgive myself. I truly do. There. It's finally said. Now, don't you feel better?

*Douglas Collura lives in Manhattan and is the author of a spoken-word CD, *The Dare of the Quick World*, and the book, *Things I Can Fit My Whole Head Into*, which was a finalist for the 2007 Paterson Poetry Prize. He is the 2008 First Prize Winner of the Missouri Review Audio/Video Competition in Poetry and was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 2016. His work has been published in *A Public Space*, *BLACK&WHITE*, *Coe Review*, *The Dos Passos Review*, *Eclipse*, *The Evansville Review*, *Forge*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *The Monarch Review*, *Sanskrit Literary-Arts Magazine*, as well as other periodicals and webzines.*