Subterranean
{***Exeunt omnes***}

A long black hall
runs in the basement
of the building
we call chaplains' school.

True to LBJ's word
there's a light at the other
end of even this tunnel.

I saw its letters
this morning red against the cavern.
They spell
exit. #

US Army Chaplain Center and School
Fort Monmouth, 1982

You can never tell

Part of the problem is Johnny, little boy,
apple of his father's eye, conceived in love,
raised to be one notch above what dad and mom
ever dreamed of or were able to achieve for themselves.
Johnny sees the tanks which his dad drives.
They're parked in clean rows in their pool of steel,

They see the tanks on Sunday
as dad drives the family to chapel,
and the tanks are still there
when they go home after brunch at the club.
60 tons of cold steel,
silent, parked, waiting.

Nobody tells Johnny what the president
and generals and colonels and the sergeants know,
and they don't tell Johnny that when the balloon
goes up its his dad who will mount up.

And what they don't tell Johnny is
that the trade-in value of one tank
is four long, steel, gray boxes, perhaps
one for Johnny's dad.

The president asks on television,
What will we do for peace, America?
Nobody thinks to ask Johnny
who may have the answer. #

Carson 1982

Carson, V

The Mountain Post,
always in the shadow
of the mountains,
Pikes Peak, and

Cheyenne Mountain,
where the spooks watched
for blips on the radar,
to ward off the enemy

before the enemy could strike,
but 4 NCOs never saw the enemy
in the mountain shadows
when they tipped a few

at the club, a late lunch,
a run into town
to watch the hotties
strutting their stuff

on South Tejon;
goof for a few laughs,
but they caught it on the I-25,
just off the Mountain Post,

in the shadow of
the Rockies
that they loved. #

Carson VI

In the shadow
of this mountain
deity called
Pikes Peak,
a husband
had hired
a hit man,
to kill his wife,
and for some
good reason,
wifey was in the way,
and needed to be gone,
but the hit man botched it,
only to have wifey
pull a gun from the glove box
—*how'd that happen*?—
and shoot the hit man,
dumbfounded, between the eyes—
one day before his ETS*
as he tried to push
the car over a cliff
while the husband watched,
from a safe distance,
not raising his voice,
only muttering
"Oh, shit!"
but not lifting a staying hand,
and the company commander
said something like
we don't know
why people do
what they do. #

*ETS is the acronym for the soldier's *expiration term of service,* or the date of his/her discharge from the military.

Carson VII

In the shadow
of Pikes Peak,
falling across the
barracks, two soldiers
made a deal.
Money changed hands,
an argument ensued,
one said that it wasn't
what was agreed on,
the other said it was.
And they drove out
toward Pikes Peak—
the old Cripple Creek Road—
the back way,
and the two friends
stopped to settle it,
and here's where the story
takes a twist,
when the soldier
bashed his buddy
in the head
and dropped him
off an embankment,
high above a creek,
the water rushing cold,
into the canyon
already beginning
to cool down
in the early
evening shade
of Pikes Peak. #

Fit to fight

The tip of Ed's finger was gone
and, he said it was nothing much.

Well, he said, I shot myself in basic training.
Yeah, he said, it wuz my M16.
Hmm, he said, it happened when I,
ahhh, put my hand over the muzzle brake.

Yeah, he said,
it was ahhh stupid.

Oh, he said, I'm okay with it now.
Ahmm, he said, they let me stay in the Army.
Yeah, he said, they sent me to see the shrinks.
Ummm, he said, they said I was okay.

And now Ed came by
just about every day to talk,
and insisted on calling me Father,
okay because
ahhh, there was no one else. #

Carson 1982

Redlegs angelic

Marge was a fixture
at the Divarty Chapel,
her Pentecost red pants
and high holy day white blouse,
a tall, lean figure marching
in Sunday after Sunday
after everyone else was seated
and the service had begun,
and she arose to announce
her prayer intentions loudly
so as to be heard not
just by all in attendance
but also by her God
who was attached firmly
to her—gimped leg, red pants, and all,
his servant for the chapel called
Redlegs, for the soldiers of
the Division Artillery.

Marge was wild vine growth
among potted-plant Protestants
who allowed faith bit by cautious bit,
for whatever God might ask of them,
while hiding the hurt that He did not do
more in their little chapel called
Redlegs, and of course Marge was
welcome—as were all—but she was,
truth be told, somewhat of a distraction,
even staying on to do a repeat
with the Catholics, announcing her
prayer intentions loudly so as to be
heard not just by the Lord,
but by all in attendance.

So let it be said for now,
        for then,
        and for all time,
Marge was also a bit angelic,
no wings or gown, but week by week
announcing the intentions of a wild
and relentless God who cried out
for the marginal faithful to arise and
care for the plantings of the Kingdom

in their midst: the kid who enlisted just
out of high school, away from home for the
first time; the sergeant, unable to lead soldiers
or his marriage; the lieutenant
biding his time, having been told
that the Army was probably not a
good career choice, and angelic Marge
cried out for them all, for the deployed,
for the next in line,
and for those on standby.

O 'tis hard to recognize the angels
with red legs in our midst,
but let us never neglect
to entertain them. #

Carson 1982

Password

The artillery set up in the woods, always in the tree lines, the guns—under camo canopy, facing east, always east—and this *Schwarzer*, a black man, walked up from the village just below the woods where the guns were laid, and the guard stopped him and asked if he needed something, and he shook his head and said that he just wanted to hear English being spoken again. And the guard told him that he couldn't come any closer. And that was it for the English.

Carson 1982
Reforger