

## Four Poems

*by Jay Lesandrini*

It's a long time back  
to 15 N. Second Street  
where nothing changes but  
the seasons; turning years  
into memories of a  
sidewalk, splitting our front  
lawn like a cement cross.  
I can remember each room  
separately, as though each  
is a house that contains  
a memory of my youth.  
There, in my bedroom, I  
awake — nine years old  
with summer thought resting  
beneath a fresh snowfall.  
My mother sleeps lightly  
downstairs, alone. She dreams  
of my father, now four years  
dead; buried beside sister  
at the Holy Cross Cemetery.  
But I am happy not knowing that  
death takes no holidays.  
In three years, my childhood  
will end, and I will be left  
with only memories of  
15 N. Second Street,  
Evansville, Wisconsin.

George Fritcher would come over with his wife every Tuesday to play pinochle with my parents. George owned the local popcorn stand, where he sold sno-cones and cotton candy from the trailer parked adjacent to The Pizza Palace on S. Main St., across the tracks. He always brought popcorn to us when he came to play cards. And I would stay up and eat popcorn, and listen to them talk, and then slowly fall asleep on my mother's lap, and they would have to stop the game so that she could put me to bed. On Christmas, George would come to our house dressed as Santa, and deliver presents to us kids. When my father died, Tuesday nights became lonely without popcorn, but Christmas remained the same, until George died.

On certain Sunday mornings  
I would walk alone to St. Paul's  
Catholic Church, on the corner  
of First and Garfield streets.  
I would leave my house when  
the church bells rang (fifteen  
minutes before mass) and sometimes  
I'd make it on time. I  
always sat in a back pew  
when I was alone; or instead  
I would ascend to the choir loft  
to observe the ritual that  
I seldom felt a part of.  
At St. Paul's, the choir had  
long since disbanded, and now  
the loft was a haven for  
rebellious youths whose only  
reason for religion was to  
please parents. I knew no other  
reason for religion, and I  
accepted this as reason enough.  
So I would take communion,  
following the others to the back  
of the church, making no right  
turn at the door to the loft —  
and the last ten minutes of mass.  
Instead, I would walk straight out,  
blessing myself as I left; with  
a guilt that evaporated  
as quickly as the Holy Water  
that dripped from my forehead.

# Your Hair

—for Shelley

Your hair has just travelled from  
1968 to 1986 in just over  
an hour's time; and now it rests  
in a trash can in some hair-  
cutting joint that your sister  
frequents, and suggested that you  
do the same.

You look just fine. No complaints.  
Even Dylan has changed in  
eighteen years; and if you like  
your hair in 1986, then so do  
I, though you no longer look  
perfect for a bookcover of  
Brautigan's.