



William Hoffman

John J. Soldo

A WHITMAN MAN

Frank is a man Whitman still sings about
a common man, a worker
descended from immigrants like the ones Whitman
celebrated amid the crowds of "Mannahatta"
immigrants who filled the cities with work
and the plains with harvests to match

he will not, however, get lost in any catalogue
I will not let him be passed over in a long-lined
list of visionary detail
giving example to the body as soul
or to old Walt's driving notion of democracy
I know the man too well to let him be lost
amidst crowds

his hair tan, his eyes brown
like the roughness of his hands
his body scrawny but muscular
a shortstop dashing like a retriever after a stick

after high school he worked on Wall Street
but did not take to the collared life
and now runs his mother's fruit and vegetable stand
it is said along the avenue
they have the best produce anywhere

he will never be profiled in Fortune or the Wall
Street Journal
(which of Whitman's soldiers would have been?)
but I write of him now because as boys
we hit the open road on our bikes
to Prospect Park where we'd circle the lake
then rest in the grass on a hill of trees
feeling so free

Frank and I were/
are Comerados