

## *As a Child*

“You're going to meet Mark. You'll like Mark,” said Rick, my best friend from Straffordville. I did like Mark, he was cool. Sitting around his room were toys, but Mark was looking at the window. “You want to go outside?” he asked.

“Sure,” I was always up for a run about his yard. It wasn't an ordinary yard, it had a number of farm buildings, and a large irrigation pond with turtles, frogs and fish. It could take hours to walk around. We were like Tigger and Roo, friends of Pooh-bear, going for a walk.

As an adult, I flew from California where I was living, to Ontario, Canada. It was great to see Mark. He had become California cool, sun bleached hair, lively smile, and in better physical shape than others.

Having a beer in his kitchen, I could see his energy rising. “You wanna ride in my truck? The one with the Hemi engine?” he asked.

Soon we're sitting on a bench seat, bouncy like a couch. Mark behind the wheel, I'm in the center, Rick on the other side.

Mark built actual race cars and here we were in a  
Hot Wheels like, Hemi engined field truck,  
No seat belts, no truck license, no worries.  
We went speeding around the farm trails,  
Our race track of sand,  
Tires spinning, engine roaring,  
Mark laughing, blue eyes blazing,  
Me hanging on the dash and smilin',  
Rick cheering him on!  
“Is that all this thing's got? Come on!”  
We'd laugh, and go faster and faster.  
Mark was always ready to go, go, go,  
And exciting his friends along the way.

Unfortunately, each decade has heroes who crash and burn. The sixties had Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, and Jim Morrison. This decade had Robin Williams, Anthony Bourdain, and my friend, Mark Langland.

## Crashed

His mind was in trouble, he was depressively pained,  
Each time he tipped his glass, his senses drained,  
Down and Death-wards he sank,  
As though of hemlock he drank.

His mind was a tangled forest, the light grew dim,  
Lost in the woods, he feared Brothers Grim.  
Darkling he whispered to the Reaper in rhyme,  
He called the Specter's name too many a time.

He was half in love with easeful Death,  
To take into the air, with his last breath.  
And in a moment of delusion, he ended his pain,  
We only heard silence as his soul screamed in vain.

He had followed the Reaper and knocked on his door,  
Now laying as if asleep he will awake, never more.  
Now the Sound of Silence is his disembodied song,  
Dust to dust, no pain, no sorrow, no longer wrong.

He had built engines that he made rumble and roar,  
Now they're idle as he goes, pedal to the metal no more.  
He and I had run in the fields and played in the stream,  
Now I will drink to my friend who I'll see in my dream.

Sad are we, whom he had at one time cherished,  
We feel dazed and confused that our friend has perished.  
His bright blue eyes and his laughter, we remember anew,  
Happier, are we, for his happiness, we knew.