

The last view of mortal man

(For Don O'Brien)

Wishing for end to come, swiftly
But it lingers, lingers for 2 years ... more
Abandonment of the spirit, please

But the soul lingers against the will
Give up, give up, give it all up
Perversity of nature, fight on and on and ...

I sit, next to him, watching football
As we have for years and years and ...
"What a bad call," I cry

I see a smile, I think
But he is "unresponsive"
His children, unresponsive, his wife dead

We sit alone now, just the two of us
Friends unwilling to see a dying man
He unwilling to be seen dying

What he had is gone, mostly
What he has left are memories
Recorded in a book, only possession

"Port to port," The story of a young mans journey into
manhood
"Port to port," The story of a warship clearing for action
"Port to port," The memory of those who returned

For years we were "best buddies"
Tied by the sea, the sea, the sea
He the old chief, I the collector of stories

He sank a camel in the Suez Canal
The United States Navy paused briefly
On they're way to save the world, Korea, Indo-China

At the helm of the great ship
In the face of a typhoon
Even the admiral was sick

Military paradise: a .45 on your belt,
A 16-inch gun at your back
And an angry Turkish soldier with bayonet, fixed, at your
side

First class, Chief, Master Chief Petty Officer,
Principal character in this poem
You rise through the ranks as you fail

I stare out the window
As he has these many days
Fixed prison of your last view of a mortal man

We shared a beer at thanksgiving
We shared a beer, I drank it, at Christmas
I drank to your health on New Years

"I'm sorry, he's not here now,"
She said without emotion,
"Call the family," she said

"We buried him on Tuesday next to his wife," she said
"Was there a service," I asked?
"No," she said and hung up.

--- Steve Glines