

Allan Gurganus Tribute to George Eatman's 50th
birthday, 1996.

The Ballad for Dear George, Somehow Fifty

Love, Allan

A man who looked young at mid-century

Had virtues all quite evidentiary

His faith in his friends

Found means for all ends

Shy of time in the State Penitentiary.

Some white boys are born with fine manners

Good genes provide wrenches and spanners.

Well, this family tree makes an orchard or three.

George's forebears, the Signers, the Planners.

His ancestors are pure Carolina.

Land grants and Cantonese China.

Moving North from the Scorch,

His own accent, his porch,

George said, "Yankees are shrill,

but they're minor!"

This young man quite aristocratic.

Fell into century erratic.

He's outdated and kind.

Cursed with standards refined.

He's a gent and a scholar (a good hand with a dollar).

He's noblesse with oblique in the age of fatigue.

His goodness seems quite automatic.

His heart has a beautiful clarity.

In this decade of greed, he has verity.

Those benefits he threw - Barbeque, Brunswick Stew

Counter tenors he offered.

Large donations were coffered.

And it all seemed more Party than Charity.

The lad has an eye for decor

But not the kind found in some store.

Chipped marble, antique - makes the boy's knees quite weak.

Like Louis Quatorz, he would regild his doors.

Was it velvet? He'd paw it.

Plain wood? He'd faux-bois it.

With lush high-church hints,

George dabbled in chintz.

He had fire in his belly

For sways some found Nellie.

Piranesi engravings soon ruined his savings.

Owened no rocker by Thonet.

It lacked fringe upon it.

He'd a paint a whole area

Plus, Jerry, his terrier.

What Eatmanesque porno meant?

Show him ormolu ornament.

He thought a man's home was his castle

And damn the expense or the hassel.

Bauhans seems quite passe,

Far too steely, too gray.

For Goerge, a man's home is his tassle!

To whom shall we finally compare him?

What saints can we quite bare to spare him?

The Most Royal Highness meets Thomas Aquinas?

Tallulah and Bette with Brahms, Donezetti?

So much, he has tact on.

Pal of Sir Harold Acton.

He's a Southern Cole Porter; he's Robert E. Lee,

He does all his sit-ups, he's so unlike me.

His heart, in this town, is the one finest organ

In all of Northwest and in all Adams Morgan.

He's King of us boys in the white collar "hood."

George is slender, attractive, and loyal and good.

Also brave, clean and thrifty.

Can't believe that you're fifty!