

PLYMELL'S RECOLLECTIONS OF HIS TIME AT JOHNS HOPKINS

I WAS WORKING ON the San Francisco docks when a couple of students came to visit and urged me to come to the Writing Seminars. I had dropped out after freshman year of high school and after roaming in the West, went to Wichita University for a few years not working toward a degree, but mainly to keep out of jail. Tuition was nominal and work was plenty, and gas was 15 cents a gallon in New Mexico, so everything was easy in the '50s. There was still a future that even fools could hold. By the '60s, I had influenced and been influenced by the Beat Generation when Allen Ginsberg and Neal Cassidy moved into my flat in San Francisco. I experimented with all the legal hallucinogens and watched the Hippies come and go. The Beats wrote introductions to my work and I was published by the noted publications of the day. I had put it all behind me by the time I quit my job on the docks and came to the Seminars; I was linked to labels, but essentially an outlaw or outcast to any movement. My main influences in life had been rounders when I traveled the Western states with my sister who worked for madams, and I worked various jobs while grooving with jazz hipsters of the '50s from Kansas City to Lost Angeles. Route 66 was my commute and I read Loren Eiseley who grew up on the plains as I did, and the hip poets, Patchen, Cummings and mad Ez [Ezra Pound] and surrealist Hart Crane from Ohio. I never associated poetry with universities then. Bennies, Boo and Bebop were my style.