The Communion

By Floyd Collins

I remember still the lakes of our eighteenth year.
Each stream seemed a running aisle without altar,
Teeming with blue channel cat and trout at an age
When all mystery arises from the commonplace.
A young man’s breath would catch in his beard
To hear a horned owl’s mournful nocturnal cry

Or glimpse a winsome blonde’s short gypsy shag
As she strolled by the barber’s red, white, and blue
Striped pole. We’d pick her name to a forgetful air,
Then imagine her bathing naked in Banjo Creek.
Rick, you’d raised your own pyramid in Memphis,
Briquette by briquette of incandescent charcoal

Glowing in a barbeque pit where you basted a rack
Of beef ribs. We’d tipple tumblers of iced bourbon
And Coke while an insect zapper lured white-bellied
Mosquitoes swollen with the West Nile virus. We’d
Listen to their vital saps spit and crackle in the ultra
Violet lantern’s glow. How we loved to hear them fry.

Inside the foursquare den a stereo would slot and spin
A vinyl 33 r.p.m., The Rolling Stones’ “Honky Tonk
Women,” Charlie Watts’s copper cowbell tinkling
Before he began to pound his pagan skins, Keith
Richards joining in with his immortal six-string riff.
There was nothing like Mick Jagger’s down-home

Grit to flavor a midsummer night’s drunken debauch.
All along Briscoe Road, livestock trod the sodden turf
And bellowed. Next morning, our hearts muscled dull
Blood into our temples and a felicitous dolor revived
Our wonted world view. Still, we shunned all pulpits
And splintery pews. We opted instead to pop a cork.

And savor a fierce brown vintage that poured smoky
And crackling into a glass. But the move to Red Banks
Mellowed us both. Cornbread sliced in thick wedges
And cold buttermilk became our daily fare. We chose
Apple cider over cherry vodka. Watching plum trees
Ripen and drop their dark fruit like bruises enhanced

Our gentle pleasure. Evenings we'd pay heed to Walt's
Redbones and blueticks baying at a treed raccoon.
We watched radio towers pulsing like the old RKO
Logo feeding its feeble signal, the weather forecast
Warbled from fork tines. You'd already observed,
Rick, how our persimmons had been bitten by frost.

A half-century passed before you were consigned
By blood relations to a crematorium and reduced
To heat-flaked bone. But I still set a place for you
At this table and carve the roast and break the fresh-
Baked bread. My knife unlocks the smooth aroma
Of rum cake. I breathe in and this poem begins.

Revision #11
Created 2026-05-12 17:33:28 UTC by Michael Guthrey
Updated 2026-08-05 14:13:01 UTC by Michael Moore