

REAL POTATOS

for Tim McKay

The night after the judge
said to his government
you can't build your road
Up there
because it would obliterate
the silence and drive off
the last pilated woodpecker
so that the Big Spirit
could not come to
the Yurok High Seat anymore,
the indians invited us
to a school gymnasium in Eureka
where every June they honor
the elders and the new graduates.

When they called the whites
out on the shiney wooden floor
to notice us for having
wanted to stop the road too,
I had to fight back my eyes
because we'd all won something
and I didn't want to bawl
before people I did not yet know.

Instead of words though,
the indians gave us each
a sackful of potatos
to take to our kitchens
or plant in the back garden.
I took the spuds home
damp under my arm
and when we ate them the next week,
the tears of victory
tasted real upon my plate,
real as real potatos.

V. McKay '55
