

Hightop Cemetery

by Madeleine Crouse

for Bob Larkin

We stand at your gravesite, high
above fields and woods, above
roads going not too far away. Others
stand in two's or three's between old
head stones blurred by time. Down
the hill a friend stands alone

*

Early on, men buried
loved ones with spears,
bone knives, and drinking
horns, piling rocks on a grave.

*

A soft breeze lifts wisps of our hair,
the folds of our clothes, we are called
into silence by your friend the Quaker
minister. In quiet we calm

*

Fifty thousand years ago
in Slovenia, the Neanderthals
buried their dead strewn
with flowers, evidenced by bones
found layered with pollen.

*

You would like today with friends
and family here. We suppose
you've noticed, wherever you are,
something funny that sets in you
a smile. Stalwart in life,
you stepped to the plate no matter
the pitcher and swung directly
at what came your way.

*

Looking over fields, we stand
together confronting our farewell.
A military man, honoring your service
in WWII, plays Taps, as baskets
of flowers are placed at the grave.

*

Farmers know their neighbors. A school-
bus driver, returning students, eases
the bus near us. The children inside
are quiet, quiet. They realize who
we are parting the day for.