Nelson Just Keeps Going  
While the Rest of Us Commune  
(1969)  
By Margaret McLeod

Nelson was the guy  
had to straighten every nail  
shave his hair off every March  
make us mad because  
we couldn’t make him mad.  
He was mean that way.

Nelson was the guy  
had to fix things  
make us  
just make do  
had to make shit work  
‘til it wouldn’t work no more.  
He was tough that way.

Nelson smoked hand-rolled  
sometimes pot  
but mostly top  
tobacco from the big yellow can.  
Saved his butts  
to smoke them yet again  
watched us through his smoke  
while we talked  
and waved our arms around.  
He was a quiet guy.

It was Nelson  
drove the old truck  
double-clutching  
to the dump  
a 1940 Ford its only job  
the final trip for  
something done enough  
to deserve a final rest.  
Nelson knew the trick  
of knowing when.