



THE PORK PIE HAT

It's a cool, quiet May evening.
The music on KJAZ is slow ballads.
I'm reading about how the military
can't catch drug smugglers
when a young round bodied, round faced
guy with round horn rimmed glasses
comes bouncing through the door.
He is wearing a sweat shirt
and a grey Pork Pie hat.
It's the kind we used to carry
with such a low crown
that it wouldn't fit on the head
without breaking the pork pie shape.
Some people bought them anyway
because they looked like the Pork Pies
of the Forties and Fifties that
Lester Young and other jazz musicians wore.

I ask the young man how he got
the hat to stay on his head and
he shows me what he had done.
He gently and evenly punches up
the center of the crown just enough
to fit on the brow and still keep
the crease around the edge
that forms the pork pie.
He has also bent up the front
and back of the brim making it
look like Hunt Hall's hat from
the East Side Kids of the Fifties.
"Where did you get the hat," I ask.

"I got it from a woman
I know in New York," he begins,
for moving her futon across town.
She got it from a guy who she was dating
because she loved this hat.
Then she ditched him and kept the hat.
You know those clubs in New York
where the doorman chooses
the people who can come in
from the crowd at the door.
They pick the hippest lookin' people.
Well, when they see this hat,
they say, 'hey, you with the hat
come on in.' Every time, I get right in.
They call it a Home Boy hat in New York."
He puts the Pork Pie back on
and bounces back onto Grant Avenue.