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Coronado

John McMillan

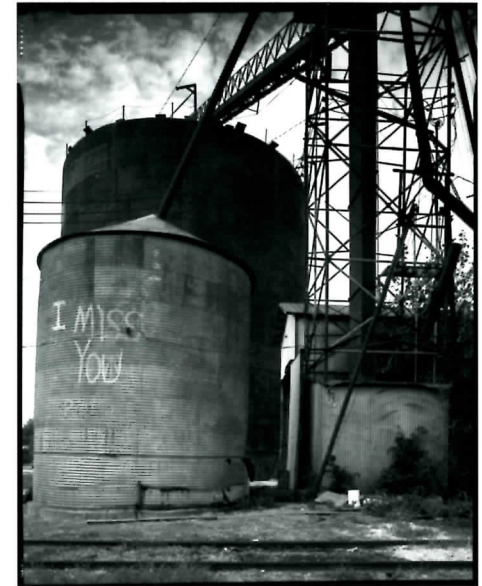
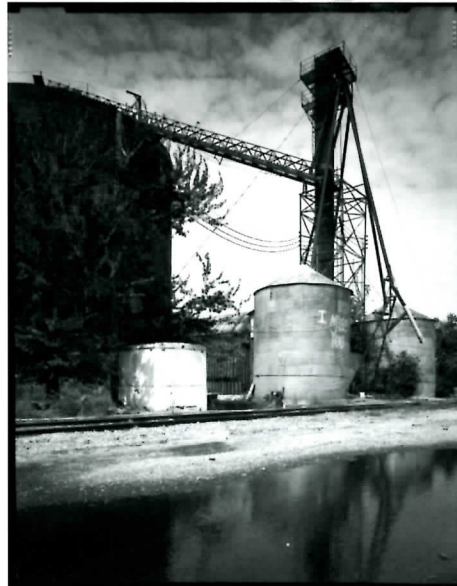
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Coronado

He suffered all of his life with horrible,
crippling back pain.

Not a soul he ever told, not even his family knew.

He would take medication for it, never complained,
never let anyone see him taking pills.

He worked all of his life, lifting boxes, and putting away
other people's things.

When he was ready to die, everyone knew it.

He didn't tell anyone about it, but they all knew.

He had the cancer badly in his prostate.

I hope I don't get the cancer; I would have to tell everyone.

I'd tell anyone who would listen to me cry and
complain about the life I was missing.

It did not take him long to die after the doctors found the cancer,
after it was very large.

I was in the warehouse lifting boxes.

I saw him walking up the hall with his matching clothes,
a sharp dresser.

His dog had been dead for a while so, he was alone.

He walked steady with broad steps.

I don't know if he had a smile or not, I guess it
was just a look of intent.

I watched him walk the fifty feet or so to the door.

The door he had put there himself.

He reached out the hand worn by seventy years of
hard honest work.



He turned the knob.

He walked out the door into the mass of shelves

I was working under.

He stood there, didn't say a thing, just stood there.

He reached out his hand to shake mine.

His eyes were stern and dry.

I shook his hand.

It was the hand shake that said it.

It said, "All of your life I have been here,

I will be gone soon, live it your way young man."

The first and only time I ever shook his hand.

He gave me five dollars to mow his lawn, but he
never shook my hand.

Less than a month later, he was gone.

Before he was very bad, I asked him if he ever saw
things like fairies.

He said, "No," shaking his head to affirm the answer.

I do remember a couple days before his final.

He asked, "Where is Drew?"

My father, his son, told him, "Father, Drew was
your daddy; he has been dead for a long time."

I said, "Well, if he thinks he has seen him lately,
he will probably see him again soon."

That's all I remember, but mostly, I remember
his hand shake.

I don't have the guts to shake hands with people.

It always seems too personal, almost vulgar. I just
nod my head at folks, not like him.

John McMillan