

“The Ballad of Ed Weintraut”
Recited on 21 February 1998
In Honor of his Seventieth Birthday

Three score and 10 years ago
Our father, as you quite well know,
Came into this world with a glorious mission:
To keep the name Weintraut from facing extinction.

In west Philadelphia he learned how to talk,
In west Philadelphia he learned how to walk,
In west Philadelphia the mold was being set
For the choices and actions that he would beget.

One factor should not escaped our attention:
This boy came to age in the Great Depression.
Life was not tough, but it wasn't luxurious.
And the lessons he learned he has passed down to all of us.

From his father and mother he learned not to shirk
And to values the fruits of a hard days work.
From the pages of some long-forgotten magazine
He remembered the following haunting refrain:

“A wise old owl sat on an oak.
The more he saw, the less he spoke.
The less he spoke, the more he heard.
Why can't you be like that wise old bird?”

That wise old bird sat on an oak tree
And guided the boy to the local AC-A-ME
Where he made his first attempt at gainful employment
Though he knew this would not yield professional enjoyment.

As he looked for a trade that would be quite enthralling
He discovered watchmaking: and this was his calling!
With tweezers in hand and a loop in one eye
He'd make his mark in the world as a top-notch watch guy!

But work was all that the young man desired,
So on weekends he drove around Philly and inquired
Where one could find girls who knew how to dance
And two might be inclined to fall in love at first glance.

One night, when the stars were shining their brightest
One Catholic girl passed his sight-for-sore-eyes test:
She was tall and lanky and light on her feet,
Dorothy Claire was her name, an Irish Moffet.

Upon their first dance Cupid's arrow was shot:
It was clear from the start that this Ed loved his Dot:
A true Weintraut, he lived up to his name,
“faithful in love” ever since he remained.

It goes without saying that in their marriage was stronger
than most of their peers, and it will surely last longer.
So standup and shout out and let's give three cheers
For the couple who's been married now 46 years.

That seemed like a good place to stop this account,
But I've much more to say, so I hope you won't pout,
When I ask you to sit and, without dissension,
Give the rest of the story your undivided attention.

No sooner had Ed and Dot sealed their betrothal
That old Uncle Sam forced a whole new proposal,
Demanding that Ed pack his new duffel bag
And head for the South, North Carolina, Fort Bragg.

The proverb says, distance makes hearts grow fonder.
Two years in the army, though, can make one's eyes wander.
Did he get distracted? No, his love didn't falter:
And in June '52 he led Dot to the altar.

And in the next year the young couple was blessed
By the birth of a son—a bad verse writing pest!
While Dot cared for the baby alone in the home,
Ed worked very hard, worked his fingers to the bone.

And work hard he did! He worked his butt off
For the business run well by Nathan Postiloff.
From this master he learned salesmanship, and much more,
And before old Nate knew it, Ed opened his own store.

The first years were lean, but word quickly spread
Of the watches and diamonds that were to be had
At wholesale prices! — what could ever be cooler! —
In the store of the man known as the Boy Jeweler.

A consumer's Saint Nick, the public he entices
With low overhead and even lower prices.
Come, toasters! Come, wallets! Come, Westclox wall fixtures!
Come, hair dryers, mood rings, and Dormeyer mixers!

He sold, and they came. They came, and he sold.
But they didn't quite understand what ever he told:
"Fiddiddies on the side," he improvisated,
"The schmendrick's on the loose," "this gem is suffocated."

He sold, and they came. They came, and he sold.
And in a very short time there was a sight to behold:
The store had grown beyond all expectation.
From the storefront business to a corporation.

Sun came from near, others came from afar.
Send me your tired, your weird and bizarre!
Rockhead, Meyer Strickmann, and Pottstown Joe,
The Mover, Abe Sisholz, and Al Dadamo.

At home things blossomed with a similar speed:
First, Bob, then Neil, and then later on Steve,
And shortly after the move from Philadelphia
The birth of a girl whom they named Little Cynthia.

The boys grew up quickly and had different interests.
They made no commitment to running the business.
Ed took up teaching and Bob's music rocks,
Steve's in computers and Neil sells stocks.

And three of the sons Heard the exhortation
To pass the name "Weintraut" to a new generation.
They went out in search of some good-looking women.
Dynastic ambitions would come to fruition!

so: first there came Berta, and then there was Trish,
And then there was Teddy and Jimmy and Denise.
And then there was Sparky, and Megan and Crystal,
And Benjer and Zachary and then Baby Nichol(as).

And lo and behold, from such humble beginnings
In west Philadelphia, at a time of slim winnings,
This man had accomplished what few ever see.
The list is impressive. I'm sure you'll agree:

A store that provided for his families needs;
Three sons who had given him eight great grandkids;
A building in Philly's historical section;
A wife who still gives him unwavering affection;

A house in New Jersey, two Lincolns (in fact!),
And miles and miles and miles of model train track;
And a purposeful life that has borne so much fruit:
For his 70th birthday he deserves our salute!

His gait maybe slower; his hair a bit thinner.
He may even eat less when he sits down to dinner.
But his body's still active and his mind is still keen:
He's a hard-working, stamp- and train-collecting machine.

One wise old owl just sat on a limb,
But this wise old bird still works out at a gym!
Someday, when my age comes to three score and ten
I hope that I'll have the same energy to expend.

To conclude: we are assembled today at this celebration
To honor a man worthy of our emulation.
You've helped us lead good lives, that is for sure,
And we hope that you'll guide us for 70 years more!