

## LAWRENCE JAY DESSNER

### *Collecting*

In my town  
Children come collecting;  
The St. Pius marching band needs plumage,  
Abandoned infants need my old telephone books,  
The United Methodists, affluent with Bingo,  
Want to give my old clothing to the poor.

The downcast eye and shuffled foot  
Of primordial and vestigial shame  
May do for the simpler causes of nine or ten;  
Soon it will be the popped and glossy eye,  
The heartless learned-by-heart spiel.

The children will graduate to magazine subscriptions,  
To proud boast, begging for Junior Achievement.  
They will grow to nestled cookware and hopechests,  
To encyclopedias, expensive light bulbs.  
They will bloom, at last, to cemetery lots,  
Insurance, OK Used Cars, trailers, Hoovers,  
Aluminum siding, foamed insulation, baby pictures,  
Diapers. They will come with cosmetics,  
Tubs of detergents, carpet swatches.  
They will call, long distance, from retirement villages,  
Vacation estates, sanctified retreats  
Where our next Saint stands ready to pray for me.

Cerebral palsy,  
Sending the soccer team to Albuquerque,  
And Jerry Lewis' disease,  
Will be their recreation. In due time,  
They will take their last leave of my stoop.  
Friends will come collecting for their gold watches.