

In P. Papky, Ed. (2006), *THE BERRIES ARE SWEETER HERE: OLDER WOMEN WRITING TOGETHER*. McMaster Centre for Gerontological Studies: Hamilton ON.

Car Talk

Alone with you at last in the coppertone Chevy --

After months away from home,
I had lost my certainty,
at age 18, was not sure,
needed you to make things right.

You had always been there for the answers:
first skate on double blades,
hitting the ball farther,
tough math problems,
unusual word meanings.

"I'm not so sure, Dad, about this religious dogma
or that, not so sure we Catholics
have all the truth,
nor we Americans.

Can you put me back where I was,
lift me back to my comfortable seat
in the car, heading toward the future,
show me which route to take?"

"Thank God," I heard. "You are beginning
to grow up now. So bright and yet
I questioned would you ever learn
to navigate the roads of life."

"But I've lost my destination."
"No, you have just changed to a map
of another scale. Now you will steer
beyond the black and white
of well-posted highways."

Looking back from this crossroads,
I wonder why
I was taken aback to hear
you too had doubts,

doubts were OK.

I wonder how
many times before
you had tried to get me to turn
on the lights.

I wonder how
you knew to idle
later on when my doubts
led to Vietnam protests,
views crashing with your own.

And I wonder how I knew --
Driving on,
I would find direction
from moment to moment,
my compass set true
by this talk
in the car.

Ellen B. Ryan