

# Poetry for an Empty Stomach

Steady Eddy trades chow for verse.

BY GEORGE VUKELICH

Steady Eddy was saying his little cafe on Willy Street was getting so much acclaim from the local restaurant reviewers that all the years he spent in the Blair Street Baitshop might have been wasted.

"All those lost years," he laments, "I was trying to make money selling the bait raw, when the real money was to be made in cooking it."

Of course, as the Indian points out, if these kindly reviewers had ever reviewed his baitshop in the olden days,

Steady might not have become the legend he has become.

"Reputations," the Indian concedes, "are bigger than life, and people who never even met you get their own idea of who you are by what they hear about you. Take baseball. If you get the reputation for throwing a spitter, you don't have to throw one every time. In fact, you can go through a whole season without ever throwing one, but no one will believe that you don't."

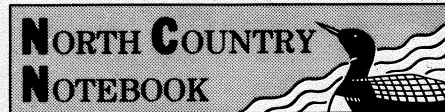
"I don't know about reputation," Steady said. "I know that our little cafe is getting acclaim from the local food reviewers and I'm grateful for that. Jerry Minnich was very kind to us in Isthmus. Then Jay Rath was very kind to us in the Capital Times."

"Jay Rath even said our specials were 'eclectic.'"

"You thought that was a typo," the

Indian said. "You thought he meant 'electric.' You were gonna call him."

"I thought he meant our specials were shocking or something," Steady admitted. "Somebody tells you your cooking's eclectic and you figure they



want their money back. We never talked that way in the Airborne."

Steady said a lot of new people showed up after those reviews. One was a poet who wanted to trade some poems for a plate of jambalaya featuring the "chunks of duck" he had read about. He said that image just overwhelmed his senses.

"So I traded," Steady confessed.

"What the hell? He was one of those starving poets. He said these were summertime poems hot off the griddle. Some were haiku. Some *gatha*. What the hell. I told him he was a very eclectic writer. So we traded. Put some in your column. Give it a little savor. Like garlic cloves."

Steady brought out a notebook page along with the gazpacho. I devoured both.

\*

June bugs  
hardshell kernels  
cracking underfoot

\*

Aware  
the rabbit sees  
the snare

\*

Without shade  
and lemonade  
We shrivel

\*

Two butterflies  
revolving, dissolving  
into sun

\*

A new morning  
the mourning dove  
Joyful!

\*

Bright chipmunk  
pirouetting, forgetting  
the cat

\*

Summer wind  
unseen snakes  
going through grass

\*

Frog in the water  
Bass in the weeds  
Watch, now.

\*

July storm clouds  
wild as bulls  
chasing, catching cows

\*

Summer cloudburst  
flattens the flowers  
for being there

\*

This rain is a gift  
from your mother  
Think of her now.  
Open your mouth.

\*

When you are Here  
BE Aware.  
When you are There  
BE There.

"That's all he had for now," Steady said. "He's home working on his 'Gazpacho Folio' for next time. Funny. In the baitshop, I wouldn't have traded fathead minnows for poems. Must be age. I figure I'm supporting the arts." ■