

**The Old-Country Man:**  
***My Grandfather in Translation***  
by George Vukelich

We were Rumanians from the Old Country  
In Transylvania: Tata Nostru was Our Father  
We came to this country and brought our crosses  
We looked for Luck and Bread in this Christly Land

Our backyard without a fence:  
Only the barbed wire of the Bucyrus-Erie plant  
Pigiron: and the men who no-speak-English  
We made the power shovels for Panama  
And the big jobs of digging  
Around the world:

The foreman from Ireland: he called us foreign  
What the hell his father dead.  
He could not remember.  
And he forgot the rest.

I liked my kimmel and there was always the homebrew  
Sundays I walked the grandchildren through the gardenplot  
We went poking in the crawly cucumber vines  
The kids chewing on carrots  
The sun coming West and the Limited train  
Going for Chicago

*You never watched us closely in the cornfield, Old Man  
Sneaking the cornsilk for our cigarets  
That was the summer we finally went to the store  
and bought the Twenty Grands and told the man Schulz  
They were for you: your hands were bad with the rheumatism  
and you could not roll your own:  
We lied:*

America has the body and the  
mind of a Young Man  
And there is no fear of Anything  
that walks or crawls  
Or carries a gun or a club or a  
stiletto in the seaboot:

America is that quiet tough One  
who just got off the boat  
And was heading for the steelmilss

around Gary and South Chicago  
And Sandusky Conneaut and  
Lorain, Ohio

I got muscle, Mister, You got  
Money?  
Time and a half for overtime and  
you own me  
From Monday to Saturday and  
you can buy me on Sunday too  
Only that comes extra

I dig your ore I make your steel  
I bring my woman and my old saints  
Here: USA  
She say our kids all coming one  
day big: Very Big  
We going buy house: and please  
We going to stay a little bit.

*And this was my father's saying also:*

*Pray  
Like you are going to die tomorrow  
and Work  
Like you never going to die at all.*