

## ODE TO HOWELL

Howdy Pardner, my name is Howell  
And not yet ready to throw in the towel.

Eighty is the age  
Still turning the page  
While walking the halls on the prowl.

At Baylor, fifty years have passed  
In a flash, hard to believe so fast.

I paid them my dues  
For them all good news  
Like money in the bank while I last.

Many patients have become good friends  
So they and I hope it never ends.

But the truth of the matter  
Says the Mad Hatter  
Really depends on how well one mends.

Mending after one of Howell's jobs  
Is as sure as eating corn on the cob

When ripe in the summer  
It's never a bummer  
And enjoyed by oodles of mobs.

He has been the surgeon's Steady Eddie  
Always on call and at the ready

For come what may  
To this very day  
Scalpel in his grip and hand really steady.

He's been known to have a sharp tongue  
And more than one resident's been stung.

But it's all for the best  
As they learn not to jest  
With the master at the top of the rung.

So somewhere around now, we can say  
This is Dr. Jimmy Frank Howell's Day.

Whether eighty or fifty  
He's still pretty nifty  
So to him we say, "Hip Hip Hooray."

— William L. Winters Jr., M.D., 2012

## WHEN LILACS LAST IN THE DOOR-YARD BLOOM'D

1

When lilacs last in the door-yard bloom'd,  
 And the great star early droop'd in the western sky in the night,  
 I mourn'd—and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.

O ever-returning spring, trinity sure to me you bring,  
 Lilac blooming perennial and drooping star in the west,  
 And thought of him I love.

2

O powerful western fallen star!  
 O shades of night! O moody, tearful night!  
 O great star disappear'd! O the black murk that hides the star!  
 O cruel hands that hold me powerless! O helpless soul of me!  
 O harsh surrounding cloud that will not free my soul!

3

In the door-yard fronting an old farm-house, near the white-wash'd palings,  
 Stands the lilac bush, tall-growing, with heart-shaped leaves of rich green,  
 With many a pointed blossom, rising, delicate, with the perfume strong I love,  
 With every leaf a miracle...and from this bush in the door-yard,  
 With delicate-color'd blossoms, and heart-shaped leaves of rich green,  
 A sprig, with its flower, I break.

4

In the swamp in secluded recesses,  
 A shy and hidden bird is warbling a song.  
 Solitary, the thrush,  
 The hermit, withdrawn to himself, avoiding the settlements,  
 Sings by himself a song.  
 Song of the bleeding throat!  
 Death's outlet song of life—(for well, dear brother, I know  
 If thou wast not gifted to sing, thou would'st surely die.)

5

Over the breast of the spring, the land, amid cities,  
 Amid lanes, and through old woods, (where lately the violets peep'd from the  
 ground, spotting the gray debris)  
 Amid the grass in the fields each side of the lanes—passing the endless grass;  
 Passing the yellow-spear'd wheat, every grain from its shroud in the dark-  
 brown fields uprising;  
 Passing the apple-tree blows of white and pink in the orchards;  
 Carrying a corpse to where it shall rest in the grave,  
 Night and day journeys a coffin.

— Walt Whitman

Walt Whitman (1819–1892) was one of the great poets of the nineteenth century and authentically American as well. He was a fervent admirer of Lincoln and worked as a nurse in Washington, D.C. during the Civil War. April 14, 2013 is the 148th anniversary of Lincoln's death. "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" is Whitman's tribute to the fallen president, a eulogy that follows the funeral cortege west to Illinois for his burial. The first five stanzas of the poem are reprinted here.