On Your 80th: Doggerel Dedicated to Don
Edward S. Casey

Here I am perched on the palisades of the Pacific, thinking of you high above the East River that flows in from the Atlantic. I’m thinking of you turning 80 just as I’m about to turn 75: you were always ahead of me! And at every stage and still at this advanced phase, where age is meted out in five-year spans. But we both began in the same place – Kansas, in the middle of the middle of the Continent, some would say this is Nowhere, but you and I know better:

You hailed from Hope, my ancestors from Enterprise:
To some it will come as something of a surprise
To know that these two tiny towns are only miles apart
And that our forebears knew each other’s names by heart
And are buried near each other within a short ride by horse-drawn cart.

From that flat and now barren land we both departed while young, seeking our fortune elsewhere: you to Boston, I to New Haven, then both of us to Illinois for a spell – you in the south of Southern Illinois, I in the north at Northwestern.

Despite all these commonalities of history and location,
We didn’t converge in person until you gave me a vocation –
This was to teach at Stony Brook thirty five years back:
Where I joined a most promising and varied pack
Of philosophers of just about every type
Though you saw to that continental philosophers got the hype.

We’ve been colleagues and friends through the thick of divisive politics and the thin (some would say the hot) air of philosophical prose,
Pursuing ideas wherever they lead: Who knows?

Don: always, semper, you have been my model for doing creative philosophical work, forging an entire new field of technoscience, renowned for writing book after book, each ever shorter, even as my own keep getting longer and longer.

Not bad for a Kansas farm boy, Don. Not bad at all!
And to anyone who thinks the tales I’ve just told are tall
I beg you to believe me, once and for all!

For the man whose ninth decade on earth begins today is for real, really real:
You see him before you, for you share the same space in the sober East even as I linger in the Lotus land of dubious dreams -- the far West.
But I say to all assembled: Happy Day to the Chief: you are the Best!

Ed Casey, January 16, 2014