

## CONVERSATION WITH AN UNDERSTANDING ATTORNEY

MARY KENNAN HERBERT \*

You said it is important to dig up those earliest  
fragments.  
I agree, I should  
dust 'em off. Look at Dad once again,  
that Polish kid with slicked-down blond hair, posed  
on a pony.  
Look at two-year-old Mom with shiny black hair  
combed carefully  
to one side, round toddler wearing a grin hinting of  
Scots-Irish and Cherokee stories of  
self-destruction, freedom,  
blood.  
Those photos are fading and hiding what I need to  
know,  
or what I want to tell.  
How did they meet, those trusting kids  
who leaned on each other in quick movie passion,  
WWII style?  
Think of her at 80, remembering the names of family  
cows and horses on a farm now lost, now buried  
like her ashes located conveniently to an  
Interstate.  
And his stories of ghost-parents dancing  
to a Victrola while he watched as if in a dream,  
telling us about his big gray cat,  
ghost cat, a striped tom rife with symbols, plump

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\* Originally from St. Louis, Missouri, Mary Kennan Herbert teaches writing and literature at colleges in New York City. Her poems have appeared in numerous literary journals and other periodicals in over 20 different countries. Six of her books have been published by Ginninderra Press in Australia, and one by Meadow Geese Press in the USA. She has received grants and writing awards; her poems have been awarded three first place awards in competitions in recent years.

stories to please us, to make us want to know more.  
How did they meet, exchanging glances in some  
Midwestern dive,  
deciding to speak, to touch?  
Now I want to know, so I can again  
embroider, stitch, paste, and  
carefully tape imaginary pictures into an  
old-fashioned story.  
Good grief, I can show you.  
We can pretend we have all the time in the world.