

ANITA TANNER

Divided

His call came dressed
In honor
As the President grasped
For a handshake,
Cuff link to cuff link
Across a varnished desk.
Untried image fit
As did dark suits,
Stiff collars, ties;
Deportment:
Sunday perennial best.
I wore feminine esteem
Quite well that year.
(The woman behind the man)

Sequent pregnancies,
On time installments
I iron his shirts,
Stitch priscillas,
Waver
Between diapers, homework,
Relay his messages,
Bottle orbs of peaches,
Baby riding my hip.
Like a wall-hung sergeant
The ringing phone
Policies our premises,
Crisis and query
Inundate the bulletin.

I sit alone
On the bench
With our six and the stress
Of quieting—
His occasional smile
Deigns
From the podium.
(He looks so *USELESS* up there.)
Appendage-like
I band us homeward.
Downhall,
Outside his carpeted cubicle,
"Do-Not-Disturb" shimmer
Awaits the clergy click.