

Lancashire Saint Dies

Rita Bowles

John Henry Butters, well known millionaire and philanthropist, died today at the age of 84. Born in Manchester, England, in 1908, an emigrant to the Salt Lake Valley in 1926 where he opened his first meatpacking plant in 1938.

He wanders the back alleys of his childhood
Mossed and decaying bricks
Tower skyward to imprison him
Cobbles rise to thwart his escape
Keep him forever in his place of poverty,
Of desperation, of anxiety
The dogs find more food than he does
He dodges the canine excrement
Picking up speed on his last spindly legs
He will die here
In this labyrinth of stone and damp
Hearing his mother call his name
In Salford dialect
Oblivious to the carpeted hospital room
Colostomy bag, catheter, I.V.
The tray of manna at his bedside
Baby peas in beef gravy, mash
His breath catches
He stumbles on an uneven flagstone
Sprawls sideways against a loose drainpipe
Urine, rust, and stale ale invade his nostrils
Water drips in metered cadence against his arm
He must reach home, he must reach home
There he will be safe
Hungry still, but safe
A dog comes to lick the drips
Salted by his sweating body
Mum's voice sounds closer now
Soon she will find him
In the Pendleton alley he never left