

## **Al Pogue, Roselle Role Model**

Even before hitting my first stroke,  
Even before watching the men play,  
There was Al Pogue  
Drawing the wet chalk lines  
On the clay tennis court he earlier rolled.  
The lines were as white as his skin black,  
As perfect as the crease he pressed  
In his khaki school-janitor work pants  
Mimicking those of his army slacks  
Or of the high school's granite floors he swept  
With green compound a few hours earlier,  
Or of the baby's fine hair he painted  
With his self-taught hands and eyes  
On carefully stretched canvas several years later.

Yet there was finesse in his game  
Measured by the spin of his drop dead shots,  
His take on mid-sixties' black-nationalist currents  
Spun on the bench by the courts,  
And the texture his brush massaged  
From many-colored oils  
Revealing wall paper,  
Peeling and uncovering  
A tenement's brick wall in his later years,  
Cut too short by a heart attack at 45.

He was the custodian and caretaker  
Of our town's public places  
Who turned artist and caretaker  
Of our political souls,  
My role model then and to this day.