



A PLACE FOR POETRY_____

LEAVING IT ALL BEHIND

—JAMES A. AUTRY, *Love and Profit: The Art of Caring Leadership*, 1991

There were days when we still didn't get it,
that this wasn't like school or the military,
that we wouldn't graduate or get out
and leave it all behind.
We brought lunches in brown paper bags
and folded airplanes
to fly in the park,
and lusted after secretaries
just in from the small towns
and still learning how to dress.

We pitied the older guys
playing out their big-time businessman roles
as if most of them were not just some kind
of free-market bureaucrats.
Somehow we knew we'd do better
and we knew we'd be different,
without that need to cover our asses,
without that fear of failure.
We would give young guys like us
plenty of room to make us look good,
and we would ignore stupid policies and politics
and get rid of deadwood vice presidents
who wasted time and money and office space.
We would have the guts to take our money and run
before the job pushed us too hard
and the next title became too important,



before we found ourselves on airplanes every week
and in the office every weekend,
before our kids stopped caring if we were around,
and our wives drank too much
at too many ladies' luncheons
where they were going to have just a sherry
or one glass of wine,
before we got tired of smiling at every jerk
who might spend a dime with us,
before we ate every oversauced meal
and sniffed every cork and drank every bottle of wine,
before we went to every sunny resort
and heard every self-improvement speaker
and danced at every black-tie dinner
and applauded every chairman and program committee
and carried home every printed tote bag
and monogrammed vinyl notebook
and T-shirt,
and put every smiling group picture in a scrapbook.

Before all that,
we would get out.