



Old Saw *Articles*

The Newsletter of the Guild of New Hampshire Woodworkers

by Jon Siegel

How I Bumped into Donald Hall



We observe with sadness the passing of poet Donald Hall. He was the Poet Laureate of the State of New Hampshire, and later the Poet Laureate of the United States. [Here is a link to his obituary in the NY Times.](#)

This on-line version contains several wonderful photos. The first photo is Donald standing in front of his ancestral home in Wilmot that I drive by almost daily.

In his last book, "Essays After Eighty", Donald discussed his driving habits, both good and bad, and began with the words, "Like most 80 year olds, I thought I was a good driver, but decided I should stop driving before I hurt somebody." Well, that isn't exactly true, as I am here to tell. Actually the State decided he should stop driving. About 6 years ago Patrice and I were on our way to Boston. As we entered the ramp from Rt. 4 to Rt. 11 in West Andover, I suddenly saw a car veering over the center line. I warned Patrice,

“Look out for that guy!”. She slowed, but the car came straight at us and hit us head-on! Our air bags deployed (first time I ever saw that) and the powder in which the bags are packed filled the car. I mistakenly thought this was smoke, so I wanted to get out as quickly as possible, which I did. But Patrice could not open her door because the damage was mostly on the driver’s side. I went around and was able to open her door from the outside. As Patrice got out she said, “That’s Donald Hall!” So all three of us were standing there, only slightly injured. As retold in Donald’s book, I said to him, “Are you Donald Hall? I always wanted to meet you.” And he said, “Well, I guess we bumped into each other!”. In the book he wrote that I did not think that was funny. Actually I did think it was funny, and later repeated it to many people; but I was just too shocked at the time to laugh.

Apparently Donald had dropped a cigarette and was looking for it while driving (instead of pulling over). Patrice and I received injuries from the seat belts (compressed sternum), for which we later received some money in a law suit. Our car was totaled, so the money came in handy



helping us get a new one (because insurance never gives you enough).

So many friends told me they heard about Donald’s passing, and the mention of Wilmot, NH in the news is such a rare event. He was a beloved resident of our town: he loved Wilmot, Kearsarge Mountain, and the whole community where Patrice and I made our home for 35 years.—Jon Siegel ●

