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Paw

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Daddy's orange has white boots.
He questions why? The point is moot.
Stink bugs! Protein pellets!
Litter on the floor!
While you're dwelling on my boots
I'll slink right out the door.
Slink and slink a slink a-slink
There's no such thing as danger –
Empty can's almost as good as
Tuna from a stranger!
Cuttin' corners, fencepost-leap!
Now I'm on your roof.
And scream, white-hair: HEY YOU, UP THERE!
But I remain aloof.
Damn the cats? Damn the rats,
You politicking scum!
You waste your mental energies
And dream that I am dumb?

“Paw” is a painful yet playful effort to remember my father Mikel Measel in a way that frees him from the terrible ALS that took his life when he was in his very early forties, and I was only nine years old. In “Paw” I attempt to capture both of our traumas and common spirit of frustration: always wanting to be heard, feeling largely misunderstood, frustrated by politics and searching for escape in leaps and bounds. Mikel’s own poetry spoke of the envy of a pet’s life. I hope I have given him that here. The purpose of “Paw” is to offer a chance for commiseration while masking human pain with the face of a commonly loved, yet speechless, animal. I hope that the readers who come to “Paw” in S&T will find it both prodding and heartening.