

I remember the tiger lilies alongside the house.
I found a dime among them once.

I remember a very little doll I lost under the front
porch and never found.

I remember a man who came around with a pony
and a cowboy hat and a camera. For so much money he
would take your picture on the pony wearing the hat.

I remember the sound of the ice cream man
coming.

I remember once losing my nickel in the grass
before he made it to my house.

I remember that life was just as serious then as it
is now.

I remember learning very early in life the art of
putting back everything exactly the way it was.

I remember affectionate squeezes in public from my
father. Usually of a joke-strangle sort. And not knowing how to
respond. So I'd turn red, with a big grin on my face, and look
down until it was all over with.



PORTRAIT OF ME

Selections from *I Remember* by Joe Brainard, from *The Collected Writings of Joe Brainard*, edited by Ron Padgett, published by The Library of America, copyright © 2012 The Estate of Joe Brainard. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission. www.loa.org

Revisting Joe Brainard's *I Remember*

Joe Brainard, Self-Portrait, courtesy of Ron Padgett.

JOE BRAINARD'S *I REMEMBER* HAS something of a cult following here at T&W. Nearly everyone of us has taught an *I Remember* lesson using Brainard's work at one time or another. The poem's spontaneity, playfulness, frankness, generous spirit, and unassuming tone have made fans of readers, writers, and teachers since its publication in the 70s. Paul Auster called it "a masterpiece ... one of the few totally original books I have ever read."

I Remember, a book-length poem, "takes one of the oldest and most familiar of poetic devices, the list ... and couples it with a mania for trivia more personal than any craze could be, and it works," wrote a *Washington Post* reviewer upon its publication by Full Court Press in 1975. The book has been reprinted several times since then, and last spring was included in *The Collected Writings of Joe Brainard* (Library of America), edited by the poet Ron

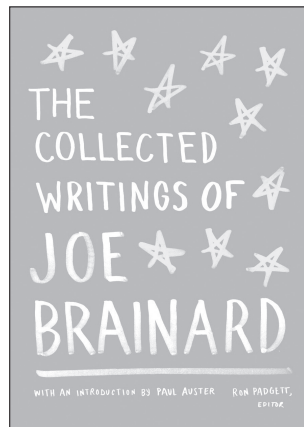
Padgett, publications director at Teachers & Writers from 1980 to 2000, and Brainard's lifelong friend.

In this special feature, we revisit Brainard's now-classic work, and take a new look at the qualities that have encouraged teaching artists across the country to turn to the work again and again.

We start with a conversation with Ron Padgett, who talks about his friendship with Brainard, his work on *The Collected Writings*, and the enduring popularity of *I Remember*.

Next up, we hear from the writers Rick Moody, David Andrew Stoler, and Matthew Burgess, who give their take on Brainard's unique brilliance. They recall how they first discovered *I Remember*, describe what the poem has meant to them, and offer a range of ideas for teaching Brainard's work.

The passionate endorsement of these writers, along with the publication of *The Collected Writings*, make it clear that Brainard himself will be remembered for years to come.



For additional writing exercises and ideas for using Brainard's *I Remember*, please visit us online at www.TWC.org/magazine.