

On the Death of Willard Hershberger

Phil Rice



You were hitting three-oh-nine, heading
for the pennant, playing just to win. You,

the mama's boy from Fullerton. Then,
with the game still in doubt, you went to sleep

in a claw-foot bathtub of gin, clean and alone.
You could have done it in the bed; left the maid

an unwashable shock. But instead you chose to
add your name to the list of the considerate dead.

The team voted your Ma a World Series share,
and retired your number with a tearful display.

They brought it back five years later, to the day.

Phil Rice is a native Tennessean currently living in Woodstock, Illinois. His writing has appeared in a wide range of publications, including PBS's *Next Avenue*, *Ginosko Literary Journal*, and *Eastside Boxing*. He founded *Canopic Jar: An Arts Journal* in 1986, a venture for which he continues to serve as editor. He is the author of *Winter Sun: A Memoir of Love and Hospice*.