

Joe Woodward

It Is Difficult

It is difficult
To put on

Sixty comes in
A red flannel shirt

A right arm fumbling
For a hole

Not to understand
You are being erased

Slowly perhaps but still
At the office

The 10:30 a.m.
You were left out of

An invitation to
A sheet cake

And at home the boys
Asking about a cough

And in the newspaper
She has finally died

The neighbor with cancer
Who was a chemist

WHAT I WANT TO SAY IS

What I want to say is
All night long I tried to

Johnnie Mae
But instead it was

Aunt lantha
With her black pocketbook

Sitting on the corner of
Your kitchen table

A set of fat
Yellow candles

Half burned down
From the last hurricane

A whole week with no power
Bananas gone black

Which you'll save into
A loaf of bread

The butter
On the old white stove



Joe Woodward lives and works in Claremont, California and is the author of *ALIVE INSIDE THE WRECK: A Biography of Nathanael West* O/R Books, New York. He is a four-time finalist and two-time winner of a Los Angeles Press Club Award. His work has appeared in *Brick*, *The Chariton Review*, *Carve*, *Zone 3*, *Passages North*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Southern Indiana Review* and elsewhere. He received an MFA from Brooklyn College and is online at www.joewoodward.net.