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On Your Birthday, Dave

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My daughter prods the thing for larvae
(She's studying insects)
While I help the old man recoil the hose.
We smile full smiles:
A job well done, my wet shorts,
The little tasks he's let me in on,
Thanks without noticing that
This man,
Who once painted grain elevators
From a much longer ladder set atop
A truck bed,
Has been stuck to the ground for many years.

Casually, he mentions there's probably
A nest on the opposite eave.

We walk over. Sure enough.
In the heat that's carried into September
We decide to let frost take care of that one.

On Your Birthday, Dave

(for David Schelhaas on the occasion of his 60th birthday)

Robert J. De Smith

On your birthday, Dave,
Hang a diatribe above the urinal,
Spin a few screws into deck wood,
Croon a bit,
Try on a new word;
Shoot some hoops, favoring that knee.
Wear that lived-in jacket and tie,
Pull over when the world gets too beautiful
And write something.
Hammer out a letter to the editor,
Help an old man to the john;
Then we'll know it's you.