**Rob Smuniewski is Dead**

Dead at 18. Hit by an 84-year-old driving a 20-year-old Honda.

Rob Smuniewski, whose engine revved higher than any of ours: dead.

Who wrote "I love redheads" on his desk, on his locker,

who stood on a table in the cafeteria and asked a redhead to the prom,

who jumped down and danced out of the room shaking his head

when she said no, who wrote a love poem to redheads

from a list of favorite words (ginger, auburn, strawberry,

freakin' and one I said he couldn't use in school) which ended

"the only way to tell if the drapes match the rug is to see the –

and that's the word you said I can't use!" Who loved his quad,

broken down on that January night. Rob Smuniewski,

who must have flown in the air like the deer I hit

last winter in Maine, shot out of the darkness, eyes as wide as mine,

both helpless to stop the sudden collision. Rob, who danced

more than walked, dead. Rob, who called the ladies "Dawl"

and the men "Coach," always neat in khakis, oxford shirts –

argyle vests and ties for game days – who told his sister,

"I don't go to school to learn; I go to entertain."

Who taught me never to ask, "Any questions?" in class

when he said, "Yeah. I have two. How come my nose

always gets sunburned first no matter what I do.

Look! I look like freakin' Rudolph! And another thing!

When you wear a robe around the house you're supposed to feel manly.

I feel like a woman. What's with that?"

Rob freakin' Smuniewski.: dead. Who you knew,

even when you wanted to strangle him, couldn't find

his own off switch any more than you could,

who would later apologize and say, "You the man, Coach."

Who, when he launched into the frosty air, might have waved

to the fear-stricken driver, might have thought this will make a great story,

might have thought as I did when Cam rolled her old Volvo

thirty years ago in Vermont as the black pavement rose

to meet my passenger window, "So this is how it freakin' ends."