

WALT MACDONALD

Angelica's Banjo and Karate

Aunt Angie taught banjo and karate at the mall
after her last boy left for boot camp.
Firemen signed up when she flipped the big one
off the platform near the fountain,

a tag-team match of music and self-defence.
Old Aunt Mary named her baby Angelica,
the first baby born on the plains after Pearl Harbor.
Aunt Angie raised five boys, marines like their father,

a banjo the last thing she tried to stop crying
after Uncle Eddy stepped on a mine outside Da Nang.
A banjo's twang and jangle made any blood dance,
too busy listening to brood. So she married a marine,

what else? Aunt Angie had boxed since high school,
thrown the discus farther than most boys. Karate
was easy after the pain of babies with broad shoulders—
no morphine, but Eddy was there in the delivery room

four times out of five. Her first day at the mall,
after Aunt Angie and I played "Dueling Banjos"
faster than local girls could dance,
she circled the college coach and dumped him,

dumped him five more times for a crowd of hundreds.
Off-duty cops signed up for karate and banjo,
the whole package, young couples who hoped
they could save each other, worried mothers in sweats

who knew about drugs and rage like dolphins
with babies caught in tuna nets, boys my age
in the crowd who waved their fists with dollars
for karate, almost ready for the marines.