3-15-2000

Shifting Compass

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Recommended Citation

Bennett, Michael J., "Shifting Compass" (2000). Published Works. 25.
http://digitalcommons.uconn.edu/libr_pubs/25
By Michael Joseph Bennett

A long Maine’s southern coast snow lies deep and kisses the surf after a recent storm. Crows weave among the tall pines while deer bound across shore roads with wide-eyed grace. An afternoon sun peeks through the scudding clouds as Auburn’s evening sun bleaches Kimball’s blue eyes focus somewhere out over the frozen pond behind his Maine home and flicker for a moment. As he begins again his deep resonant drawl, more Down East in timbre than the Central Massachusetts he’d left by 1974, proceeds slowly with subtle regret. “I never was a good student all through high school. I probably averaged about three days a week my senior year.”

But it was in Worcester while working on the docks for Universal Car Loading in the city’s rail yards where the author first began to experiment with fiction. As he recalls this period just out of high school, Kimball perks a bit—and his odd innate humor surfaces. “My buddies and I always slept outside,” he remembers. “We’d siphon about a gallon of gas from somewhere then use it to go water-skiing.”

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