

Mark Arneson

**BODY SURFING (AT THE EXECUTION)**

They were body surfing at the execution,  
Oddly searching for some means of retribution,  
Gladly cheering and calling out for someone to be “fried”,  
Is this the only justice that we feel justified?

They were lighting fireworks at the scheduled killing,  
Young kids showed up too, they thought it would be thrilling,  
The witnesses all talked about it that night on TV,  
To satisfy, enthrall or appall citizens like me.

There were also those who thought it wrong—a farce, a tragedy,  
This strategy to play God on behalf of society,  
Then some to whom forgive and forget is a problem they’ve not solved,  
And still those who’ll live with sheer regret that we have not evolved.

Perpetually a pep rally or a somber wake,  
Courting contradictions with humanity at stake,  
When all there is is punishment there’s no rehabilitation,  
Neither to the victim’s memory, our own souls nor to this nation.

Murder sure stirs up hard feelings one way or another,  
Everyone who’s ever killed is someone’s friend or brother,  
And it’s tough for me to sort this out not sure what more to say,  
Yet I can’t see this “eye for an eye”—must be a better way.

10-3-94.