

# When we first told you

by [Paul Willis](#) in the [July 27, 2004](#) issue

Gail, remember the boy that broke  
his neck on the campus lawn—  
just kidding around, turning flips  
with his college buddies?  
He got his diploma this afternoon  
and a standing ovation that had to stop.

When we first told you about this boy,  
your face turned lost, you thought  
of your own at twenty-one,  
somersaulted into a field by a Mack truck.

That was a moment I could love you,  
though sons-in-law are poor in love.  
That was a moment love lay  
languishing before you, bleeding  
from a crown of thorns  
and once more giving up your ghost.