

'OH HAPPY HAWK'
THE ULTIMATE TALE OF PASSIONATE RENUNCIATION

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Good evening, gentlemen:

I had intended to give this paper the form of a Budget by writing three separate short papers--even if all by myself--as a sort of triptych. I expected to frame the longer central panel with two short ones on a similar theme--my own memories of people whom I have known personally, as compared with accounts of them through other people's eyes, in published or unpublished sources. I had used that method on composer Samuel Barber and others in my paper "'O Happy Horse': An Exercise in Name-Dropping." But the subject of today's main paper demanded the whole evening, I found, so I will have to save for another occasion--if I'm granted one!--the other two short papers I planned, and mostly wrote, for this evening.¹ In any case, the paper I shall present tonight was intended to form the crown of--as it was the original instigation for--my last one-man budget, "Seven Tales of Passionate Renunciation." Instead of the title, "O Happy Horse," however, this paper is called "'Oh Happy Hawk,' The Ultimate Tale of Passionate Renunciation."

In 1965 I was living in New Haven, Connecticut, employed by the Yale University Press as its Arts Editor. My niche included, not only Art and Architecture, but also the Classics, Elizabethan Club publications, and the Yale Series of Younger Poets. My role in this last, which is renowned primarily for picking the *wrong* choices among the manuscripts submitted (!), was to scan or "pre-select" manuscripts, either to discard then or to forward them to the official editor, Dudley Fitts, the distinguished poet and translator.²

Among them was a manuscript of undisciplined but deliberately daring, and occasionally perceptive, verse submitted by one Eric Nightingale. I have to admit, though, that what struck my attention in the list of contents was the title of one poem, "On My Father Masturbating"! Of course I could not resist turning to that page first, finding an extremely embarrassing and only too vivid account of just that--the writer's accidental glimpse, one afternoon, of his father lying in bed, fully clothed as I recall, engaged in what used to be called "solitary abuse." The author's treatment of this episode--disturbing, at least in our culture, and especially so in the late 1950s or early '60s--was psychologically interesting and even quite mature, considering its taboo nature.

What I noticed next, though, was even more startling to me, for the poem opposite was entitled, "Mrs. Edge, My Grandmother, Rosalie Barrow." The reason I was so struck by this name is that the real Mrs. Edge was MY proxy grandmother! And I soon realized that the poem was written by her REAL grandson, Eric Nightingale, who had never known his own grandmother, and perhaps had heard her discussed within his family only

after her death in 1962. How this tragic circumstance occurred and what it meant to me and my own family is the primary subject of this paper.

As far I as can ascertain, Eric Nightingale's poem about his grandmother was never published, and in any case I am quoting from a copy of that unedited manuscript, as I have never been able to contact him in person, and only last week acquired a slender volume of poems called "Unenlightened Nightingale," which he "self-published" in 1975.³ It is hardly fair to him as a poet to quote from a thirty-year-old rejected manuscript, yet what he had to say in his poem about Mrs. Edge is fairly clear, and seem to me to be some valid poetic effects in his very free four-line stanzas. The poem begins,

Grandmother Edge, whose hats I never criticized,
because I never knew how nice they might have been,
I choose above the greatest men.
The contradicted lies,

or better, the profound and meaningful silences,
put you where I want you. Ignorant,
I can begin to tell things of you I can't
mention of others.

After some typical '60s surmises as to his grandmother's sexuality and involvement in women's suffrage activities, he deals with the birth of his uncle and mother:

To digress
for a moment to your private life, you did
then find time to tie the bib
to Uncle Peter and bear my mother through your dress

in a taxi cab while racing to the pier to greet
Eleanor Roosevelt, your ally
and your enemy,
although it was not until she met

F.D.R. that she gained supremacy, exactly
as you separated from my grandfather. Mrs. Edge,
for always, you next pledged
your heart and soul solely

to conservation.⁴

The real Mrs. Edge's most lasting public achievement was indeed in nature conservation, above all in the acquisition and development of the Hawk Mountain [Bird] Sanctuary near Reading, Pennsylvania. Therefore, when first considering this topic, I sought the Sanctuary's Web-site and contacted them, mentioning that I thought my

parents had provided support during the organization's struggling early years in the late 1930s. Nancy J. Keeler, Hawk Mountain's very helpful and efficient Director of Development and Communications, responded that she had "looked up your father's record and he was indeed a 1938 charter member of Hawk Mountain Sanctuary and a very loyal member at that." The interest in birds was in fact my mother's, but my father's name and title may have lent some prestige to the organization, in addition to the money he contributed from a faculty salary during the late Depression era. The Hawk Mountain Web-site also provides a short bibliography of works that refer to Mrs. Edge, most written by her often impressively positioned supporters and colleagues.

In the University of Cincinnati Library I then found a volume containing the April 17, 1956, issue of *The New Yorker Magazine* that featured a "Profile" of Rosalie Barrow Edge by the prolific and diverse hack-writer Robert Lewis Taylor. It is quite funny in a snide way, frequently quoting Mrs. Edge's own witty comments and writings, but often turning them against her. The Profile is titled "Oh Hawk of Mercy!" after a poem Mrs. Edge, then in her late 70s, had recently written for a Columbia University extension - school class. The beginning of Taylor's article conveys a sense of his curiously *Time*-like writing, as well as his subject's own personal and professional style:

Rosalie Barrow Edge, an elderly, implacable widow, is the chairman of the Emergency Conservation Committee, an organization that favors conserving, in the wildlife line, everything. Mrs. Edge takes the view that all conservation movements except hers are limited and discriminatory, and she puts in her best licks for creatures that many naturalists wouldn't touch with a ten-foot pole. Her exertions in behalf of the persecuted skunk have opened new vistas in skunk study, and her championship of snakes--all species--is believed to be unique. The sight of a coiled, anti-social rattler [many of which reside on Hawk Mountain, as I recall] fills her with quiet benevolence, although, like ordinary conservationists, she will hop nimbly aside if the snake strikes. For twenty years Mrs. Edge has striven, by means of pamphlets, letters, appearances before Congressional committees, and personal investigations of numerous kinds, to keep American nature in something resembling its pristine condition. [But, he continues,] The results of her labors are widespread and monumental. Among other accomplishments, she once forced the National Audubon Society to discontinue trapping muskrats on a game preserve it owns in Louisiana, and she is given the principal credit for establishing the Olympic National Park, in the State of Washington. The Brooklyn *Eagle*, in a rare tribute to a non-native, once called her "the Paul Bunyan of conservation," and the *Sun* has described her, in a long feature article, as "hard-hitting, fearless, independent, and, withal, modest." Of the many public tributes to her zeal, she is fondest of a recent one in the Altoona, Pennsylvania, *Tribune* [in the town closest to Hawk Mountain itself], in which she was referred to as "this glorious Joan of Arc of conservation." She cares least for a sworn statement of the Audubon Society that classified her [during one of her first campaigns], as "a common scold."

My intention here, however, is not to chronicle Mrs. Edge's admittedly dramatic and in large part effective career as a conservationist: there are many other sources for that, and I have just heard that a full-length biography is in the works. I have not yet spoken to its author, but hope that this paper will shed some light, however distorted by memory and time, on Mrs. Edge herself.

Hawk Mountain Sanctuary's Web-site also has a link to her son Peter Edge's 14-page tribute to his mother, based partly on her own unpublished memoirs. Although I have included a few corrections from his tribute, I have dispensed with many others. This is, right or wrong, primarily my view of Mrs. Edge. Sadly, the Director of Development also sent me a copy of Peter's own obituary in *The Chicago Tribune*. To my surprise, I discovered that he died only last August, at the age of 89: although he was apparently in ill health during the last year, I might have talked with him while preparing this paper after all. Nancy Keeler also supplied a copy of a paper Peter Edge wrote on his family background, for delivery to the Chicago Literary Club in 1999. I wonder whether he might have attended the joint meeting of our two august bodies in central Indiana about fifteen years ago? But surely I would have recognized him then, with his great height, hooded eyes, and imperious demeanor. The photograph that accompanies his obituary shows him grinning but gray-haired, with his wavy hair parted in the center as I recall it from 40 years ago; but a new beard barely disguises the jutting chin that declares his inherited obstinacy. He, like his mother, must have resembled a hawk until the end!

During the 1930s, while my father, Walter Consuelo Langsam, taught history at Columbia University in New York, my mother, Julia Elizabeth Stubblefield Langsam, who had been graduated from Cornell University, worked as a secretary or assistant to Dr. Willard Van Name at the American Museum of Natural History, in the West 80s opposite Central Park.⁵ I believe Dr. Van Name's field was oceanography and oceanic life, but he was also a great bird-watcher and fierce conservationist. On several occasions my mother accompanied him and a group of mostly amateur ornithologists on early morning bird-walks in Central Park. It was there she met Mrs. Edge, who was apparently not only an expert "birdist," as they were called at the time, but a close friend and collaborator of Dr. Van Name. She and my mother soon made friends and, eventually, became extremely devoted to one another: in fact, I am convinced that my mother became Mrs. Edge's surrogate daughter--and, by extension, when the time came, my brother and I served as proxy grandsons.

So close were Mrs. Edge and my mother that soon she not only helped furnish my parents' first (or early) apartment in New York with fine things from her stores, but spent nearly every Christmas with us, wherever we moved, until shortly before she died in 1962. Although there is no question of my mother's and Aunt Rosalie's attachment to each other, Mrs. Edge also admitted that she couldn't stand her daughter-in-law, Peter's first wife Mary, whom she described as a bluestocking from an old New England family--the kind who collected *maple* furniture! According to Mrs. Edge, Mary was so provincial that she refused for years to leave the United States. When she finally agreed to accompany her husband on a trip to Britain, her mother-in-law claimed, Mary

pedantically began to study British history from the start by reading the Venerable Bede! Perhaps also to spare her daughter-in-law her disapproving presence during the so-often fraught holiday, Mrs. Edge avoided visiting them over Christmas itself, preferring to arrive a few days later.

I do not remember when Mrs. Edge first joined my family, consisting of my mother, father, and younger brother, for the Christmas holiday. Conceivably the custom began in their apartment in New York City near Columbia.⁶ But I first remember her just after World War II, when we moved to Staten Island, New York.⁷ She was an integral part of our celebrations. Although she often seemed formidable, Mrs. Edge was usually gracious with us. She was surprisingly willing to go along with our own life-style and habits, putting up amiably with a lot of what must have been for her unfamiliar and possibly distasteful behavior; she did so because of her obvious and reciprocated devotion to my mother. My brother and I sometimes called her "Aunt Rosalie," but she is still "Mrs. Edge" in my mind, and usually in this paper. Yet who knows whether she would have preferred to be treated more informally, as truly one of the family.

It was while I was a student at the venerable Staten Island Academy, about 1950, that I visited Hawk Mountain with my mother and Mrs. Edge. We stayed overnight in a rather uncomfortable nearby hotel, probably in Altoona or Reading. The next morning we climbed the mountain, which is really three peaks forming an irregular ridge on one side of a broad, fertile valley. From the top of the mountain local farmers--considering the great birds only as predators--and hunters had been accustomed to massacre eagles, hawks, and other migratory birds by the thousands, as they were drawn, almost within touching distance, by wind-currents along the crest of the ridge. In the mid-1930s, alerted to this conservation disaster, Mrs. Edge and her colleagues had first leased and then *bought* Hawk Mountain. The Sanctuary was founded in 1938 and has been maintained for almost 70 years. In spite of the loss of Mrs. Edge and her son Peter, the organization is still thriving, increasingly well-staffed and professional, yet marked by the passion and enthusiasm instilled by the founders.

But to return to my adolescent ascent of Hawk Mountain. Between fear of those rattlesnakes, a severe ingrown toe-nail, and a steep, barely marked trail twisting around and over exposed rocks, the climb was quite an ordeal for me, and even my hardier mother was breathless by the time we reached the top. Mrs. Edge, however, was still "rarin' to go." She announced that she planned--that is, she was damn well determined--to climb the mountain at some unspecified future date on her 80th birthday. Several years later, she proudly informed us that she had done so, while preserving a ladylike vagueness as to when that occasion occurred. I now know that it was 1957, the year after the *New Yorker* Profile.

Particularly memorable were Aunt Rosalie's visits to Gettysburg College in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, where my father was president for three dreadful years (1952 to 1955) before finding his--and my family's--Canaan in Cincinnati.⁸ Aunt Rosalie duly appeared the first Christmas we spent in Gettysburg. She was, however, noticeably not quite herself at Christmas dinner, definitely duller than her well-deserved reputation as a

raconteuse warranted. It turned out that she had not been forewarned the first time she came that Gettysburg was in a "dry county," so we could not serve alcohol even in our own home!⁹ As a result, Mrs. Edge was deprived that first year of her usual single glass of sherry before dinner: not surprisingly, this lack dimmed her usual spirits.

On the other hand, the first Christmas after we moved to Cincinnati, she was at her most affable, even sparkling, and in fact the life of the party! It turned out that, unfamiliar with Cincinnati's sophistication and the splendor of the University of Cincinnati's then-president's house--the former Closson family Italianate villa on Clifton Avenue--Mrs. Edge had expected that Cincinnati like Gettysburg might be "dry"! So she had fortified herself with a glass of her own sherry before descending from her room. The unprecedented imbibing of TWO glasses of sherry had melted some of her usual reticence about herself. On **this** unforgettable occasion she sat at the end of the dining-room table framed by the Clossons' magnificent Renaissance stone mantel, and regaled us with one hilarious story after another! Sad to say, however, this had the unexpected effect of preventing us from enjoying many more of her stories in later years, as she had a firm rule that she would never tell a given story more than once. It is unlikely that she had exhausted her repertory on that hilarious occasion, but she couldn't be sure which ones she HAD told!¹⁰

I recall especially well two of Mrs. Edge's own inimitable stories, both relating to her youth, which seemed even then, in the 1950s, incredibly long ago. As a girl in the early 1890s she paid a visit, one summer, to Andrew Carnegie's castle in Scotland, since one of her brothers was acting as secretary to the demanding and autocratic Mrs. Carnegie. One of the rules of the house was that absolute quiet must be maintained while the hostess took a nap for a couple of hours after luncheon. For the young, energetic Rosalie Barrow this repression was torture, so one afternoon she "snuck out" and harnessed a goat to a goat-cart used to transport visitors to and from the nearby town. Unfortunately, the goat panicked at the unfamiliar and no doubt unskilled driver. It ran away with her, downhill from the castle, causing a great hubbub and waking Mrs. Carnegie from her precious sleep. Whether Rosalie's brother's job survived this mishap, I don't recall, but the girl was instantly sent home to New York.¹¹

One of Mrs. Edge's most touching stories concerned her marriage. I may not have mentioned that, although she had striking facial features and a formidable presence--her son later described her as "a distinctive young woman" at the time she met her future husband--she was also hump-backed, or hunch-backed, as we used to say. Robert Lewis Taylor described her as "slightly stooped, a posture deficiency she attributed both to slumping at her typewriter and to bending over Audubon soil looking for traps": no doubt an example of her polemical skills and capacity for myth-making, as well as her sense of humor! To us, however, she once blamed her condition (no one else dared mention it) on the bone and metal stays used to force her waist to an Edwardian double-hands-breadth. Perhaps this deformity emerged after her courtship, but there is no doubt that she had never been a belle.

The story as I recall it was that, in the early 1900s, Rosalie Barrow, the daughter

of a well-off Anglo-American businessman in New York and his socially prominent wife of Anglo-Dutch New York descent, fell violently in love with a tall, handsome Englishman named Charles Noel Edge.¹² I remembered that he was a railroad engineer, eventually assigned to build a road or bridge in Outer Mongolia. Against all Edwardian proprieties the indomitable young woman pursued him to the Orient, as it was then called. Whether out of a sense of duty or honor, or perhaps even love, Mr. Edge married her out there.¹³ On their way home to America via Europe some four years later--quite a honeymoon!--the young couple stopped in St. Petersburg. They were invited to a ball at the Winter Palace, for which Mrs. Edge had acquired a ravishing pink taffeta ball-gown from Worth. During an Imperial waltz her new husband leaned down from his great height and whispered in her ear, "My dear, see how everyone is admiring you in your lovely new dress!" But the bride knew only too well that it was her tall, handsome husband whom they were admiring.

The next stage of Mrs. Edge's intimate history was probably told me by my mother, based on her own understanding of Mrs. Edge's situation. To put it bluntly, about 1920 she left Charles Edge when she learnt that he was having an affair with a young woman, still underage, who was HER--Mrs. Edge's--ward, for whose well-being she was responsible!¹⁴ There had never been a divorce in her family, her social standards would not allow one, even after World War I, and one can only imagine how such a situation would affect her emotions and her pride. She refused him a divorce. Presumably they were still officially man and wife until his death in 1952, and certainly Mrs. Edge retained his name and in fact was formally known as Mrs. Charles Noel Edge until her death.

It is not clear to me when it happened, but at some point Peter Edge seems to have declared his allegiance to his mother; and his sister, later Mrs. Nightingale (whose Christian name I still do not know), to their father.¹⁵ It's hard to believe--and this is the main reason this paper warrants my subtitle, "The Ultimate Tale of Passionate Renunciation"--but I gained the impression that Mrs. Edge never saw her husband or daughter again. At least, as Eric Nightingale implies in his poem, there was a conspiracy of silence among them, and it is clear from later passages in the poem that the Nightingale children were indeed complete strangers to their grandmother. As he puts it,

Ladies love to hear you
speak of hawks, and complain that conservation has stolen
your brood from you. We, your hawks,
do not know Hawk Mountain.

The next thing I understood about the Edges was that HE lost, not only his own fortune, but hers as well, including her family townhouse in New York. She then moved to a fairly large apartment on Upper Fifth Avenue, where she remained to her death. The handsome yet restrained pre-war Beaux-Arts building was considered "the last respectable apartment house" on Fifth Avenue below Harlem, but her apartment had wonderful views over the Central Park Reservoir and the park's avian inhabitants.¹⁶ Mrs. Edge once told me she had made a serious mistake. From the wreckage of her husband's

losses, she had saved only two types of possessions: Oriental pearls and Oriental carpets. But that was the year, she said, that cultured pearls came in, and Oriental rugs went out! Nevertheless, she generously helped about that time to furnish my parents' apartment, and continued for several years to share with us the spoils left from the shipwreck of her wealth.¹⁷

Some twenty years after the financial disaster, the 1956 *New Yorker* Profile reveals some sea-changes in Mrs. Edge's self-presentation. That she is first described as "an elderly, implacable *widow*" ignores the fact that, when Charles died four years earlier, they had been estranged for some thirty years. No mention is made of this central fact of her life: they might as well have still been a happily married couple, according to Robert Lewis Taylor--or more likely, to her at that time; it is probable that she manipulated her interviewer at least as much as he did her! He states that

Money has never been much of a problem to her; she is moderately wealthy, though not as wealthy as when she started conserving. [He quotes her,] "I have exhausted a large part of a once considerable fortune on this work, ... And while I do not regret one cent of it, I am now in comparatively straitened circumstances. For example, I need a new coat, but I propose to spend that money on a pamphlet about coyotes."

This overall picture does not accord, however, with my family's understanding of her truly straitened circumstances during the 1930s, at least, nor with Peter Edge's claim that she did *not* spend her own money on her organizations and publications: she was a superb fund-raiser and wished to prevent seeming to be merely indulging herself with self-supported endeavors. It is possible that she received some residual bequest from her husband's estate. My mother also got the impression that, as Rosalie was the youngest of eight children, the deaths of her elder siblings toward the end of her life brought her, not only financial bequests, but fine family possessions.¹⁸

In any case, Mrs. Edge's apartment was still crammed with priceless and historic furnishings when I stayed there for a week about 1959 while testing the waters for a move to New York, spending my days in exploratory job interviews.¹⁹ Her apartment consisted of three or four rooms facing Fifth Avenue, with at least a large foyer, a dining room, pantry, and diminutive kitchen and maid's quarters behind. There were still fabulous Oriental rugs, at least one tapestry, and a set of real Jacobean cane-back dining room chairs. The dining-room walls displayed a set of etchings from James McNeill Whistler's famous Thames set, early aesthetic portrayals of the riverside life outside Whistler's Chelsea townhouse. The Edges had chosen them in Whistler's studio as a wedding gift from the artist, who was a close relative of Charles Edge (Charles Dickens also said to have been a cousin).²⁰

Several other treasures from that apartment have stuck in my mind. To my delight, I stayed in what was obviously (under other circumstances) the library, its walls lined with books both contemporary and in gorgeous historic bindings.²¹ Among the latter was a handsomely bound set of "Bewick's Birds"--a first edition of naturalist-

illustrator Thomas Bewick's two-volume *History of British Birds*, published in 1797 and 1804, with diminutive but vivid engravings of birds in their natural and topographical settings. In each volume was a small bookplate, about an inch square, as I recall, with only the owner's name, "John Ruskin Brantwood," in bold but simple Kelmscott-like type. When I asked my hostess at breakfast who Mr. Brantwood had been, she replied, with some confusion followed by disdain, "Why, they were John Ruskin's own set; he LIVED at Brantwood!"²²

Among other astonishing *objets d'art* in Mrs. Edge's luxurious but overcrowded living room, filled not with Victoriana but with mostly real, superb antiques of earlier periods, was a precious jade box, containing the personal items that she valued most. She carefully opened it for me--it felt like a rare privilege--to show me a photograph of my mother as a young woman, presumably as she was when they first met. It also contained however, an early photograph, perhaps from a newspaper article, of *herself* as a young woman, marching along in a protest parade for women's suffrage. What shocked and even horrified me, however, was that she held in tow, not only her little daughter, but her SON Peter, dressed in a sailor suit and flying a proto-feminist banner!²³ (I have to admit that, even now, I hesitate to confess her perfidy to certain members of this Club.²⁴

Perhaps it is not surprising that, when I finally moved to New York in search of a real job shortly after the New Year in 1960, I saw little of Mrs. Edge. It was then I began that busy life of "sin and sophistication," as Bob Hilton summarized it, that I described in my year 2000 Literary Club paper, "O Happy Horse." Some time in 1962 I met a Sarah Lawrence student named Kristin Walker, whom I dated several times.²⁵ She turned out to be the grand-daughter of a Mrs. Walker, "widow of the owner of the *Brooklyn Eagle*," the once-famous and much-admired newspaper that had called Mrs. Edge "the Paul Bunyan of conservation." A small gray lady, she was said to live modestly, but still managed to take several grand-daughters on tours of Europe in her limousine every year or so. Mrs. Edge and Mrs. Walker were two of three friends, then in their 80s, who formed the last bastion of the New York Old Guard, according to another article, probably in *The New Yorker Magazine*.²⁶ The third was Miss Adelaide Milton De Groot, at whose death her bequest to the Metropolitan Museum of Art of her fabulous collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings, hitherto stored in her hotel apartment attacked against the walls, instigated the great de-accession scandal a few years later.²⁷ None of these women was a conventional socialite by any means, nor were they all rich. The tragedy of Mrs. Edge's life--and perhaps of her friends--was that she was in many ways an extremely modern woman, but at the same time constrained by the conventions of her youth in the Edwardian--perhaps even the late Victorian--period of New York Old-Guard society.²⁸

One Saturday morning in early 1962, Kristin Walker informed me that her grandmother and Mrs. Edge were planning to visit a rummage sale at the Episcopal Church of the Ascension in the East '70s, which I attended at that time. Kristin and I arrived in time to meet the two elderly women. I was shocked at how aged and worn Aunt Rosalie had become, and non-plussed when she came up to me, yet as if hardly aware of my own existence. She looked almost blindly into my eyes, and said only, "Tell

your mother I love her." Her friends, I later found out from Kristin, were convinced that Mrs. Edge, with her indomitable will, had postponed her own death until she found this opportunity to let my mother know how much she had meant to her.

The rest is anti-climax. Rosalie Barrow Edge died soon afterward. I attended the memorial service at St. Bartholomew's Church on Lower Fifth Avenue.²⁹ From that occasion, aside from its solemnity and the tributes to this great lady of whom I had known so little, after all, I remember mainly meeting her son Peter Edge, a great tall man with hooded hawklike eyes and a general impression of looking like Oscar Wilde at the height of his fame. I am afraid that what struck me most vividly was Peter's appallingly bad breath: perhaps the most sincere expression of his great grief, yet what may have been in some senses also his great relief. No matter how many interests and what deep affection he shared with her, it must surely have been far more difficult to be his mother's son than a substitute for the daughter she had lost, as my mother had been.

I doubt that I met on that formal occasion other members of Mrs. Edge's family. Probably her daughter and her husband were there at last, as well as young Eric and her other grandchildren. It appears from his poem that Eric met for the first time at his grandmother's funeral her "other family." He ends his poem to Mrs. Edge by quoting Peter's first wife, Mary, apparently speaking after the service. He says,

I talk
to your daughter-in-law, whose molten

anger at you, has molded by the way, and she says—
and let her be the last to speak--
"Your grandmother was great.
I will never see the day

"that makes a lady like her. True, she and I
did not always agree. I was for Peter
too poor a choice, and Mrs. Edge did not fear
to say things like that. Yet she and I

"shall speak softer when I die. It's true
Eleanor Roosevelt and she did meet,
and Eric, believe me, had she had the will to beat
Emily Dickinson, Amy Lowell, even, you

"won't believe it, Edna St. Vincent Millay, she
would have. She had a way with pens,
a charm, and a lens
to out-scrutinize phosphorus things in the sea.

"Your grandmother was great, diverse like trees,
loving, tragic, old, and it was not her fault

that by her nature her later growth was warped,
and she lost friends like leaves. God bless her, and forgive me."

And please forgive ME.

Thank you.

Please note that the superscripts in the text refer to Endnotes not included in the paper as delivered.
