

1973

## Desert News

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### Recommended Citation

Meschery, Tom. "Desert News." *The Iowa Review* 4.2 (1973): 6-7. Web.  
Available at: <http://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview/vol4/iss2/4>

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*"We're combing the town to see if  
we have anything left in the way  
of an Indian."*

**Sheriff Ernest Pepin**

## DESERT NEWS

Luck brings you  
to a mound  
the size of a man.  
So, you dig.  
You hope to find  
the grave of a chief.

Instead, the grave  
is empty. You  
will never know  
who was buried.  
All that is left  
is printed  
on the earth  
like a leaf.

Perfectly,  
bone-threads  
mark their way  
to the heart's cage  
like veins.  
You can see  
what survived,  
an arrow head  
where the heart  
should be,

without shaft  
or target,

the stone  
worn smooth  
as a bullet.

You leave.  
Designs of centuries  
close up  
behind you  
with the first wind.

You will never know,  
or if you do  
it will be later,  
on the way home  
with the evening news  
rolled in your hand  
like a totem.

#### RETURN TO ST. CROIX

The customs officer  
studies my photograph,  
my signature.  
Am I the same person?  
He looks at my face  
and sees  
I have cried recently.  
There are scars.  
He asks, "Have you cried recently?"  
I stare at him  
through eyes which  
no longer bear  
resemblance to mine.  
And I show him my hands  
where nothing has been added  
and he folds my passport  
into my palm  
as if nothing has changed.