

REMEMBERING MAT

No matter how or when, it surprises,
like a large, faded, brown-yellow maple leaf
drifting onto the road we tread: “He died
in his sleep, a peaceful death.” We accept

the truism, neither knowing the moment
nor the suffering. Each is left to think
about his own, remembering the man:
our father’s cousin, from a divided

country, sharing the deadly legacy
of a religious tradition. Escaping
narrowly to England’s saving embrace,
making a century of life, filled with

family, learning, pain and pleasure.
Fragments of encounters don’t coalesce
into more than mendicant words: a long
story, without the essence of the man.

Imagination may paint a portrait
of him, strong, smart, self-assured, long-lived,
encountered in Rutledge, London, Paris,
paternally helpful, not imposing.

Filling the morning stove with coal, evenings
with Joan and the children, one fast drive to
the city on the first day in London,
dinner in Paris with business colleagues,

celebrating Burns day in Highgate,
hags, poetry and cheers and a speech.
Then for years just pictures, letters, e-mails,
abreast in form, denuded of substance.

Now it’s too late to rectify the loss.
Separated by circumstance, fortune,
tattered, fading fragments of memory
must suffice to sustain him for us here.

May his spirit, alive in the hearts of
family, friends, reflected in his work,
live on and sustain the many who knew
admired, loved and remember him.

Steven Polgar - November 9, 2014