

Lessons

RONALD THORPE

I cannot remember
a day when I did not think
about dying.

The fish hasn't been filleted
that doesn't hide the
bone to choke me;

the bridge hasn't been built to stand
my crossing. As a
child each trip had me

sick on the backseat, my face
in a paper sack
once with the car still

parked in our garage.
The entire way
to Niagara

Falls, I saw the railing fail,
my family plunge
into the gorge.

Until I was eight my bedroom
had a door leading
to the attic,

and I lay in the dark knowing
it would open if
I closed my eyes.

Watching television alone
when I was nine, I shook
to hear *We interrupt*

this program –
Cuban missiles were
aimed at our house.

Then in the crowded lobby
of the William Penn
Hotel, I heard
the President
had been shot dead. When
my brother got

Hodgkins, so did I. When my mother
got Myasthenia,
so did I.

Sitting in a cold hospice room,
I was holding her
hand when she died.