

*Whole-Body Counter, Marcus Whitman Elementary*

*The mobility of this new laboratory provides versatile capabilities for measuring internally deposited gamma-ray emitting radionuclides in human beings.*

—Health Physics, November 1965

We were warned to shut our eyes.  
Everyone was school-age now, our  
kindergarten teacher reminded us,  
  
old enough to follow directions  
and do a little for our country.  
My turn came and the scientists  
  
strapped me in and a steady voice  
prompted *The counter won't hurt,*  
*lie perfectly still,* and mostly I did  
  
and imagined what children  
pretend America is, parks  
bordered by feathery evergreens,  
  
lawns so green and lush  
they soothe the eyes and pupils  
open like love—  
  
a whole country of lawns  
like that. Just once I peeked  
and the machine had taken me in  
  
like a spaceship and I moved  
slow as the sun through the chamber's  
smooth steel sky.  
  
I shut my eyes again, pledged  
to be still; how proud I was to be  
a girl America could count on.