

## Robert Grunst

### HIGH PITCHES

A little brown bat was waiting for dark,  
looking down from the dark space  
provided by the last louver slat in the roof  
peak louver. The day before I'd known  
there'd probably be wasps, and I saw  
three paper nests; I routed them  
with a paint stick, backing down the ladder  
fast and feeling lucky after what I did  
for the wind that blew the builders off  
far enough for my escape, but the bat surprised  
me. I'd been confident that I could paint  
without distractions and get down from  
that height. Our roof is pitched to an extreme  
for Minnesota winters—so the west  
winds sweep it. Snow cannot accumulate.  
I had climbed with paint and brush—no room  
that high between the house and ladder  
to use a can hook; I don't like high climbs  
anyhow, utter fear mixing with some  
wild desire to fall, and there was the bat,  
my left thumb hooked around the can wire,  
fingers holding the bottom rim, right  
hand holding the paint-loaded brush.  
We stared at one another, warm  
blooded to warm blooded. I thought  
it was a mouse at first, out of its  
mind at the highest point of the house.  
I knew even though I knew it was  
a bat, even the *little brown bat* (*myotis*  
*lucifugus*), that if the bat flew in my face  
I'd lose my balance. I looked into  
the can of white latex, left arm wrapped

around one sidepiece. I looked  
down, understanding what a mess  
I'd make breaking my neck and knowing  
too it wouldn't be the bat's fault:  
no fault in the world in fact. I have  
a field guide which says bats are *crepuscular*,  
which is a lovely word, and maybe  
the word saved me; maybe all along  
the bat was telling me not to worry,  
that it was going to stay put,  
that it was curious to see my baseball cap  
and full of the past night's acrobatics  
and every flying insect that it loved.