

# Ripple Effect

*by* Jerry Ratch

I discovered Ripple (by that fine winemaker Gallo) in a dusty “specials” bin at the back of a liquor store near skid row, off Maxwell Street, downtown Chicago. You may remember me bringing these bottles home with their screw-off caps. We drank tons of the stuff (which may account for some of our fuzzier memories!) Evidently even the winos on skid row wouldn't buy it, because it had some sparkle and frankly tasted a little bit like strawberry soda, but it sure gave a kick, and quite the headache too if you drank a lot. They were real cheap in this bin and I bought them all. They were something like 25 cents a bottle, I think.

You and I probably drank our way through half our days and nights together. So when you left your body during our first time together and floated off near the ceiling and met God, or a dusty moth with spotted wings who could maybe talk — I'm sorry, real sorry for saying, “You came, that's all.” I had no idea what it meant to you. I had no idea what it meant.

Do you think you left your soul there?

I went back to visit that house on Illinois Street one time about 20 years ago and the man who was living there let me come in and visit the basement, and my old room. I didn't see you there when I went into my old bedroom. But then again, maybe I never looked up at the ceiling, where as a baby I remember seeing flashes of lightning from my crib.

