



photo by Mike Hayman

**THE PILL VERSUS THE
SPRINGHILL MINE DISAS-
TER. Richard Brautigan. A
Delta Book. \$1.95**

Review by Greg Kuzma

These are poems with a high face
value.

The Chinese Checker Players
When I was six years old
I played Chinese checkers
with a woman
who was ninety-three years old.
She lived by herself
in an apartment down the hall
from ours.

We played Chinese checkers
every Monday and Thursday nights.
While we played she usually talked
about her husband
who had been dead for seventy years,
and we drank tea and ate cookies
and cheated.

there is so much "to" these poems,

so many clean edges and surprising
perspectives, so much fresh language,
that Brautigan is able to carry the
poems off on instincts alone. While there
is the danger in this kind of writing
in emphasizing the slight to the point
of preciousness or sentimentality,
Brautigan's eye never wallows in the
trivial, his vision is always precise and
original, and the heart that beats in
these poems is an intelligent one.

Man

With his hat on
he's about five inches taller
than a taxicab.

In some of the best poems he touches
a real immensity — one that goes
beyond the many kinds of wit of which
he is a master. "The Fever Monument"
I find haunting and unforgettable.

I walked across the park to the fever
monument. It was in the center of

a glass square surrounded by red
flowers and fountains. The monument
was in the shape of a sea horse and
the plaque read we got hot and died.

Besides "The Fever Monument," "The
Rape of Ophelia" and a few others
(those that might be called the more
ambitious poems in the book, the deeply
provocative or mysterious) the bulk of
the others attend to preserving the
perishable fleeting experiences of daily
life. While many other poets take such
occasions as opportunities for heaping
allusions or indulging mythologies
Brautigan's joust with time is but a
gentle hand on its shoulder. The quick
and economic poems which make up
the bulk of the book are just one level
above the reverent silence for the things
of the universe. These poems lodge in
our consciousness as easily as the com-
mon things which they are about have
lodged there. They help us in our small
random lives toward new possibilities
of awareness.