

Ellen Steinbaum

On the Wire

It was just after seven,
people rushing to their jobs
then suddenly the shouts, the
pointing, looking up and
there he was
a hundred ten stories in the air,
a quarter mile straight up, the towers
not yet finished.

The night before, the Grateful Dead
had played Roosevelt Stadium--
started with Bertha, on to Sugar Magnolia, U.S. Blues;
the Astros beat the Braves six-four; the next day
Nixon would resign,
but this

was morning
August seventh
a Wednesday,
and here it was just
the wire--narrow, high--
and thousands watching
as he danced like light between
the solid towers.

He was arrested, sentenced to
make magic in Central Park. Later
he went back, signed his name high on a beam.

The president would helicopter from the lawn
in just a day or two, head back to California, jowled and
grim; Faye Dunaway got married to someone from the
J. Geils Band, the new prime minister of Iceland was
sworn in, all that same Wednesday, and then
nearly three decades passed, almost ten thousand days.

It was in the morning that day, too.

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