

A JEW IN NEW YORK

by BOB HOLMAN

Like everybody else, I wasn't a Jew
Until I came to New York. In Portland, OR,
The other day, a young Latina asked me
If I were Jewyorician. Papa and Bubby
Came from Ukraine, landed in Brooklyn,
Settled in Harlan, KY, and named my father
Benjamin Franklin. My mother, the offspring
Of a coalminer, married Ben, the only Jew
In town. He didn't last. Ma remarried.
In kindergarten, in Cincinnati, instead
Of moving to the afternoon session the second

Semester, I stayed in Morning and changed my name.
This is the year 5755. In Chinese it is Year
Of the Dog. I just learned that the time between
Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur
(Day of Atonement) are the Days of Awe. Moody
And gray, with dashes of absolute clarity, I love
These days. Cleansing summer's sweat from the streets
Of New York, I always think of the year beginning in
September. "That's when school starts." A holdover
from Youth. This year, for the first time, woo,
It's the real New Year, and I am a real Jew.
A real Jew, and a real coalminer's son, too.