

STUDS TERKEL, RIP

From Working:

No matter how bewildering the times, no matter how dissembling the official language, those we call ordinary are aware of a sense of personal worth—or more often a lack of it—in the work they do. Tom Patrick, the Brooklyn fireman whose reflections end the book, similarly brings this essay to a close:

The fuckin' world's so fucked up, the country's fucked up. But the firemen, you actually see them produce. You see the put out a fire. You see them come out with babies in their hands. You see them give mouth-to-mouth when a guy's dying. You can't get around that shit. That's real. To me, that's what I want to be.

[snip]

I can look back and say, "I helped put out a fire. I helped save somebody." It shows something I did on this earth.