

THE EMPTY NEST NEWSLETTER

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"Kind Reader, here's a tip for you:
Go buy, though skinny be your purse
And other books of yours be few..."

-- Thomas Augustine Daly, "Ballade of the Tempting Book"



NOW THAT YOU'VE READ IT

and Loved It -- OR, if you haven't yet, GUILT TRIP! GUILT TRIP!

Chicago Tribune, Sunday, December 7, 1997 Section 14 Page 7 Books

EDITOR'S CHOICE

The charming tale of a lost rural life

STORIES FROM THE ROUND BARN

By Jacqueline Dougan Jackson
TriQuarterly Books, 249 pages, \$24.95



center of her family's dairy farm near Beloit, Wis., and uses it as a place to view the hardship and danger -- as well as the rich pleasures -- of a fascinating history.

Elizabeth Taylor

Jackson mixes biography and oral history into more than a charming tale of a lost rural life. This engaging work of creative nonfiction places this unusual barn at the

Note the text says "more than charming"! I'd prefer the headline to say "robust stories," or even "raunchy," though they're not all raunchy and my editor left out the raunchiest. "Charming tales" sounds so namby-pamby. But I ain't bitchin'.

COWCULATIONS, by DR. MU

Kenosha. Prof. Don Piele of U. of Wis., Parkside, discovered Stories from the Round Barn, used it with his book club, and also with his column in a computer journal, Quantum. A winsome cow, Dr. Mu, posed a series of problems "best solved with a computer algorithm" about moving the round barn, for a contest for the readers. The prize for the "smoothest move" -- a book. The article also told about Wesson Dougan, gave "The Aims of This Farm," and Dr. Mu even wrote an appropriate poem. If any computer mathematician wants to try the problems, click "Cowculations" at Dr. Piele's website: <http://usaco.uwp.edu>. OR,

Stories from the Round Barn

by Jacqueline Dougan Jackson drmu@cs.uwp.edu
(TriQuarterly Books, \$24.95 list price, \$17.47 through December,

for Dr. Mu herself:

BORDERS, in Madison, Wis., last December, chose Stories

as one of the 8. See their review below.



Each December, we pick a handful of gift books -- books that we'd like to give, books that we'd like to get -- and discount them 30% for the month, in order to make your holiday shopping more affordable. There's always a good group to choose from; publishers save some of their nicest, and often quirkiest, books for the fall book season. Here are eight books that we particularly liked (and don't forget to look for our three cooking selections, on display in the cooking section)....

Stories from the Round Barn -- Jacqueline Dougan Jackson's gathering of tales and memoir from her family farm near Beloit -- is every bit the equal of the finest personal memoirs of recent years. Hard to have made the book so memorable, no doubt, since the author's story is not traumatic, as many of these recent memoirs have been. But it sticks in the mind nonetheless. Much of it is the style, which makes the daily life of this farm -- with its rare round barn -- come vividly to life. Jackson's writing is sharp, with an excellent memory for the telling details, and an unerring sense of the right way to tell a story, or recount a conversation. She recreates a vanishing way of life, and brings to life a cast of characters that you'll come to care for. Some of these stories have been read on "Chapter-A-Day"; this book is long overdue, and a wonderful gift for those who love memoirs, nature or farming, or just good writing.

HOW'S THE BIG BOOK GOING? WELL, SLOW.

(And I won't bug you to buy this one)

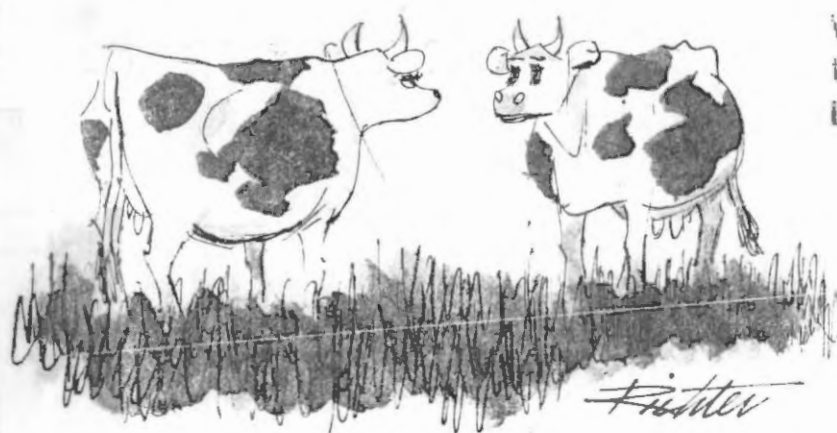
Many of you know that Stories is part of a larger whole, The Round Barn, also to be published by Northwestern U. Press, when I get it done, which is supposed to be June 1 of next year. But full time teaching (even with a modicum of time off) and everything else that's going on, plus the impossible state of my study--see all the Shoe cartoons in ENNL over the years--make the progress fitfull. If not June 1, it will surely be finished by the end of the summer. The problem is, too, where to say enough's enough. In clearing out Chez Nous drawers, I've come on all sorts of valuable material I've never seen before--our great grandfather's will, for instance, and more ancient letters with interesting details to incorporate into the already massive work. I do need a secretary--but where to find one? And more importantly, the time to work with one?

WHY NOT RETIRE, JUST WORK ON THE BIGGIE?

Good question.

I SAW LOTS OF FRIENDS

The English Department put on a beautiful autographing party for me, at UIS; many, many came! Everyone knew what a long labor of love this book was. And then Northwestern U. Press had parties in Evanston, Champaign, Mt Horeb (Wis) and of course Beloit, and it was wonderful to see so many old friends. And many more of you wrote me, requesting the book, and reporting later how you liked it. Thank you, thank you!



"I'm very comfortable with my bovinity." *

SORRY STATE OF THE ACTUAL BARN

Beloit: I could write a whole issue on what's happened to the barn. A grassroots nucleus arose to save it, we were told it had to be moved, we secured land nearby on the thruway, got an organization going (Friends of the Dougan Round Barn), were writing grants, raising money I had a blue-ribbon advisory panel lined up of influential folk--local senator and representative, present and former city managers, president of Beloit College, emeritus ed of the Beloit Daily News, etc.--and then the owner of the land said we couldn't have the barn, he was selling it to others to restore on site (thus garnering his corp. a \$90,000 tax break). But the surmise--never yet spelled out to us--is that the Friends are expected to be the real buyers, and to produce what amounts to a dairy theme park --not only restore the barn, but an interpretive center (the Big House), a caretaker's house (the Little House) and a museum of antique farm machinery (the huge garage). This approaches a million dollars, plus the cost of maintaining it all in perpetuity, with volunteer interpreters, etc. and at least a paid caretaker. Our plan was in the \$100,000-\$250,000 range depending on how much volunteer time and materials we received, with future maintenance small. The theme park is far beyond our means in time and money. So there the barn sits, prey to every wind, storm, and arsonist from the next-door trailer park. What we might do, is use our land option on the thruway to build there an exact replica--a thing of arresting beauty at a fraction of the cost, and useful as a icon of welcome to Wisconsin. We'll soon present this option to those who've contributed to saving the barn. **Let me know what YOU think!**

*Come this winter, with the first snow:
Move this barn, and take it slow:
Find a way to the freeway station,
Whose change is small in elevation.
When you've found it, turn it in,
And help restore this barn again. --Dr. Mu*

Dr. Mu says, "By my cowculations, Jackie's discount allows her to buy her own book for **\$16 rather than the store price of \$25**. She'll send you any number of books at that price, plus the postage on the package. Return this blank to **Jackie Jackson, 816 N. 5th St., Springfield, IL 62702**, and send your payment when you receive the book(s). A moo-st handy way to give your family and friends a happy holiday!"

Name _____

Address _____

Yes, I want _____ book(s), sent book rate first class

Autograph to _____



(art by Mark Breuneman)