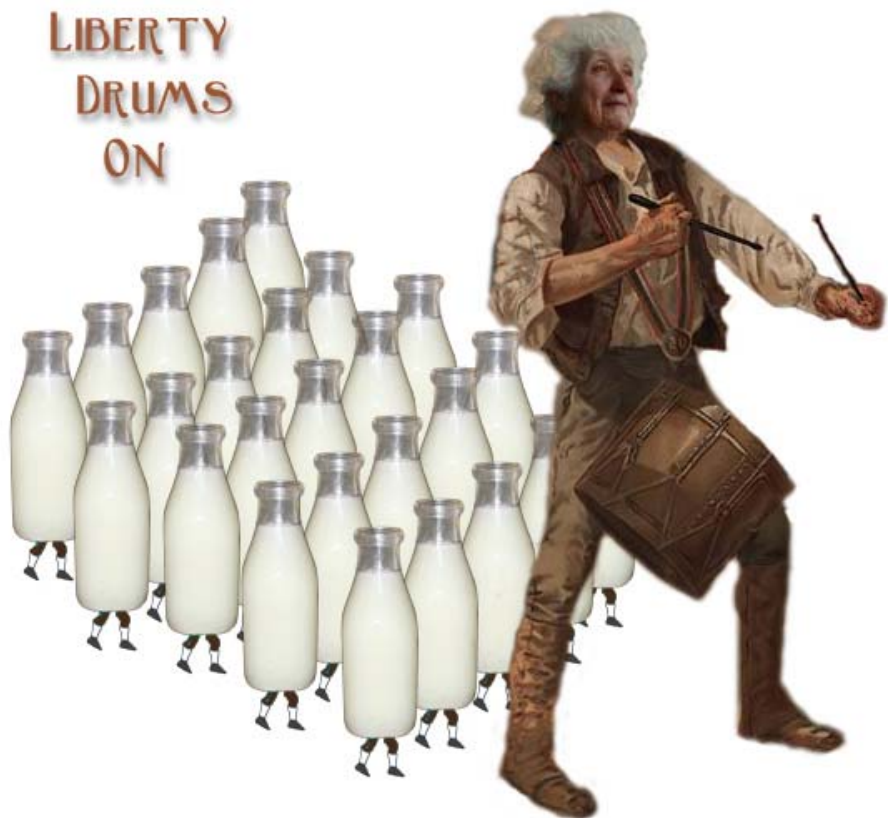


*A collection of poetry by
Jacqueline Dougan Jackson
Illinois Times - 2011*

LIBERTY
DRUMS
ON



A Word From the Author

I have decided to dedicate this 2011 booklet of poems published in Illinois Times to all of us who are keeping on drumming – be it writing, listening, and critiquing, arts, crafts, music, teaching, raising kids, cooking, following our passions from calligraphy to electronics. Keeping our spirits bright, and helping brighten others’ spirits. I’m especially grateful this year to those who have worked with me to complete the first volume of the “big book” – Reg, Roland, Jeremy, Megan, Mitch, Annette, the Thursday night group, Gillian, and Elle, and many more of you. I hope I’ve included all your names in the acknowledgements. And I wish there were a group photo of us all to grace this page – it would overflow the margins.

A picture is desirable, though, and recurring themes in these poems are family, music, and milk – so I give you my mom, Vera, poet and musician, and my dad, Ron, a raconteur who said never spoil a good story for the facts – and who started milking Daisy when he was six.

They’re responsible for a whole lot of drumming. Here’s to them, to represent not just my family, but us all.

Jacqueline Jackson



January 6

newyearspoem #6

well now it's new years again
an occasional poem is written
for an occasion: robert frost
wrote one for JFK maya angelou
wrote one for bill clinton but
when wordsworth was england's
poet laureate he refused to write
occasional poems; they are not
usually the poet's best work.
still, here is an occasion. my wish
for twenty eleven is that the large
hadron collider now finished after
fifteen years manages to find a higg
maybe two, and the yellow legged
frog now twenty-five adults away
from extinction (180 frog species
have already gone missing in
recent years; shouldn't that alarm
us?) anyway I wish the couple
dozen or so pampered pollywogs
just released from careful lab
rearing into their native streams
thrive to breed more pollywogs
me? oh I just wish to finish the
book I began when I was fifteen

*Volume I is now published. Find out
about it at the end of this book!*

January 13

To the Winter Solstice

by Damaris Jackson

*A friend of Damaris sent this poem
just in time for Dec 20, 2010, too late
to publish for the Solstice. But it is
fitting now, for we are still seeing snow
and feeling cold as the days gradually
lengthen. JJ*

For those of us who still go out, and yearn
For signs of sun-return,
On Winter Solstice, magical,
The balance-pause at end of breath,
It seems that we should brush a nest
In snow, for pinecone eggs to rest,
Catch hands with trees, or whirl,
Until a spark blows heat within the breeze.

We living things, of matter made from light,
Might trust in stars. This very night,
Reach out in rays of warmth and earth-affection.
Preface sun with sun-conception.

Damaris Jackson

January 15, 1954 – September 19, 2010

January 20

thoughtpoem #7

I have to live
a long time yet
haven't heard
enough mozart
haven't heard
enough bach
haven't heard
enough brahms
and then there's
bruch's first
violin concerto . . .

January 27

demi poem #4

so this isn't a poem
you may be weary
of grief but saturday
was damaris's birthday
her sisters and her
nephews in the west
built a big bonfire
burned the clothes
she died in burned
a slice of the special
cake we always make
for family birthdays
reminisced by the fire
about times they'd had
with demi her unique
ways they then took
the ashes along with
demi's own ashes to
the beach where the
nephews waded into
the surf and mixed
them all with the sea
the only eulogies were
goodbye demi and
we love you demi
I did not go but my
heart was there my
heart with a big hole
in it a hole lapped
round with others' love

February 3

techno-age poem #6

my daughter gillian
checking out some fact or fancy
moves from site to site
on her laptop like a trapline
sometimes she shares the
skins and shanks the livers and lights
I find myself wondering what
mega will byte her today

February 10

northfifthstreet poem #16

worst blizzard in years on tuesday
that evening the school parking lot
next door got plowed I thought
prematurely left a mountain of snow
between me and the curb then at
eleven o clock I heard laughter
thought what are kids doing out in
this weather this wind chill are they
ok I looked out until I spotted them
in the parking lot three kids about
twelve years old by the streetlamps
climbing up the mountain rolling
down somersaulting down sliding
down on fronts and backs again and
again no sleds no cardboard head over
heels playing laughing into the still
street the still snow watching I knelt
at the window it's good for the heart
to see children play hear their laughter
especially on a snowy windy night
a night with the wind chill heading
for zero a night when one's own
wind chill has been near zero too

February 17

personalpoem #5

I have to keep
forgiving myself for
things I haven't done:
promises unkept
promises I don't recall
ever having made
promises to myself
for what I've wanted
to do but haven't yet
and probably never
will it's a full-time
job just trying
to stay faithful

February 24

joggerspath poem #1

I thought I knew the way from
sheridan to lake shore drive
up there by chicago's icy lip
but somehow found myself
driving beside the lake on
a sweet snowy paved road
no wider than my honda
scant room for scattered
runners my GPS wasn't on
it would have had the auto
floating in air the patient voice
recalculating . . .recalculating . . .
though finally it might have lost
its cool snarled you blithering idiot
how'd you manage to get HERE and
WHERE do you plan to go NEXT?

March 3

springfieldpoem #11

I once knew our presidents
in order a little confusion with
the polks and tippicanoes but
I usually made it past teddy
up to franklin d which is where
I was in school but here in spfld
presidential streets are raggedy
madison jefferson washington
adams monroe jackson's in there
somewhere not much of a street
but that's not its fault lincoln
is shunted beyond what used to be
west grand but got changed to
macarthur after I will return
not unexpectedly honest abe is
paired with douglas who was a
wannabe while millard fillmore
when was he in office anyway
he's quietly minding his own
business way off in jerome

March 10

iceman poem #2

there's another theory of how
I died I'm interested of course in
my death this makes it pretty sudden
it's not a new idea the basic part
aristotle and plato both thought
of and lately velikovsky but now
I've been placed into the equation
seems a meteor a bolide (what did
we know about them then?) swung
in low sizzled the sinners of sodom
and gomorrah like sausages on a spit
knocked disobedient phaeton from
the sky before smashing on the alps
where I was simply tending my own
interests the impact punched an
arrow from my quiver into my
shoulder though it was probably
shock waves that really did me in
and what had I done anyway, I ask?
still, it's a warning we shouldn't
carry weapons on our bodies even
if we're sure they're not loaded maybe
we should tell the arizona lawmakers

March 17

before superhighways poem #1

"IF YOU
DON'T KNOW
WHOSE SIGNS
THESE ARE
YOU CAN'T
HAVE TRAVELLED
VERY FAR " . . .
but did you
know anyone
who ever USED
burma shave?

March 24

wisconsin politico poem #2

"What's disgusting?" "Union busting!"
"What's disgusting?" "Union busting!"
your IT reporter is abroad today folks
on the front line, the curb before the
wisconsin school for the deaf in delavan
our sign-bristling crowd is mustering
pretty loud chants even though half the
gang is hearing impaired they have drums
though and are signing with vigor it was
here my deafening grampa came to learn
hand spelling and lip reading no ASL yet
I wonder if governor walker and the GOP
will strip this school of its seasoned staff
cut their salaries? two hundred thousand
will converge on madison tomorrow I'll
be one of them I look forward to the
cavalcade of ancient tractors promised
to circle the square farmers are pissed too

March 31

pollutionpoem #4

hercules didn't start it of course
only publicized it – running a river
through the augean stables' filth
so that all the dirt and droppings
were swept downstream chicago
was canny to send their fecal
foulings to the mississippi via
the sag canal else lake michigan
would now be a cesspool we've
gone on treating our planet like
a sewer though and don't have
any greek god to blast our trash
into outer space anyway it's
a cesspool up there too with
some about to fall on our heads
like chicken little you know don't
you that rotating in the atlantic's
sargasso sea is a continent of
floating plastic those water bottles
we don't need shampoo aunt
jemima mattresses baggies
you name it some will disinte-
grate so that the food chain can
eat it fish crabs plankton and do
themselves in as for our atomic
sewage it won't break down sure
nevada's fighting but who cares
about nevada that's a throwaway
state we just don't want any hot
trains tootling through our yards
to get there though japan's heat is
already plumbing across the pacific

April 7

agingpoem #1

when tradespeople
waiters ushers
and such start
calling you
"young lady"
then you know
you're really
getting old

April 14

wisconsin politico poem #3

will the citizens who voted for that
disaster rejoice when their kids'
teachers are fired maybe themselves
if they teach? the experienced first,
natch. when classes increase to sixty?
when smart students shun teaching
careers? wisconsin salaries are well
below our illinois ones now they'll
have no recourse on anything is this
a political poem of course it's not
even a poem I am a wisconsinite but
an illinois teacher with pension, benefits
I worked hard likewise does my badger
daughter this isn't just about greedy
teachers in the state north of us this
affects the whole country wisconsin
was bought thanks to 5/9ths of the
supreme court with its big biz bias
corporations are people hah we are
all being bought this coup is more than
dirty politics – but today we have a
sweet moment of victory (will it last
through the inevitable recount?) the
right person won up there by 204 votes!
it could make a huge difference don't
ever believe your vote doesn't count

* * *

uh-oh I'm telling you now if your vote was
one of 14,000 not "sent in" till well after
the election it's reversed the outcome I
thought this only happened in chicago

April 21

dandelionpoem #1

my young daughters picked
dandelion heads on a sunny slope
dappled with yellow we stirred
the blooms into a crock of water
added sugar floated a slice of toast
smeared with yeast on top
and let it all bubble
odiferously in our dining room
for a couple weeks I bottled
the dandelion wine gave it
for gifts nobody liked it but
the kids gradually drank the
dregs stashed in the basement
where with friends they enacted
regularly a drama they called
"schoolboys" they took turns
being the cruel headmistress
who for punishment forced the
drink down their throats the
game eventually ended maybe
when the spirits were finally spent

April 28

Ned Stone poem #1

I knew that Ned Stone was destined for
greatness when his folks showed me
the first grade story he'd just written
a mama and papa dinosaur lived in a
mud hole with their baby the baby grew
and grew then the parents said to him
it is time for you to leave the mud hole
“What!” said the baby, “Leave the *world?*”

May 5

royalweddingpoem #1

ah, c'mon.
in the Y lobby this april 29 morn
a guy maybe forty jeans t shirt
who'd got up at five couldn't find
anything on the tube except "that
garbage" it was on all the channels
just stupid garbage who wants to
watch it anyway well a hundred
thousand people took time for
some joy and pageantry and how
many millions around the planet
there's little enough to celebrate
in our world right now my eldest
daughter was a british subject I
cherish the years I spent there
the bluebells skylarks good folk
yes I know about colonialism I
know what they did to the irish
I'm irish too but kate and william
I salute your radiant faces may
your marriage be long and happy
oh the Y guy he finally found a single
no-offal channel – it was, you guess:
sports

May 12

flowerstore owner's lament poem #1

mothers who live in mobile homes
deserve flowers
mothers who live in mcmansions
deserve flowers
mothers who live in shelters, under bridges,
in trees, deserve flowers
mothers who live on the north side
east side west side south side
deserve flowers
mothers who are raising kids alone
or with lots of help deserve flowers
all mothers deserve flowers
but do they all have to have them
delivered on the same day?

May 19

cowtagpoem #1

*from a letter to Jackie
from her father, 1959.*

He writes:

you've heard about the
cow tags I forget when we
quit stapling a metal clip
to their ears that worked
fine hardly cost a cent
but the new colored straps
cost plenty and often broke
we tried chains around
their necks these would
catch – one bonny bossy
nearly strangled herself
on the manure pile's rail
erv fonda found a red strap
the other day long torn
off a cow – plowed under
I guess – it is now hanging
on a tree in his yard when
he came in the office I
poked an old invoice under
his nose erv I said those
things never grew on trees

May 26

northfifthstreet poem #16

people drive their kids to school
these days even when they live
nearby guess they feel they have to
streets too risky too dangerous cars
line up before my house it's next
to the schoolyard the pounding bass
of their music shakes the pavement
a rapper heard down the block shouts
pimp the bitch pimp the bitch pimp
the bitch as kids climb from opened
doors their schoolbags on their backs

June 2

canarypoem #1

my friend auditions canaries a strange job
you think well it's a matter of sex and a bit
more pleasant than gendering chicks which
another friend used to do it seems that only
male canaries sing and male canaries market
for twenty dollars more at the canary bazaars
so it's worth her time (since she has twenty
some hatchlings to sell at the canary fair)
to set up her tape of canary chorus and
watch a babe closely does its little throat
swell at the music? does it even manage a
burble or two? if so it's a boy each bird
gets three shots so annette is assured
she's not fleecing her customers yesterday
four passed the test three were unmoved
they'll become mamas preferably of males

June 9

endangeredspecies poem #1

a sweetfaced overweight woman
swims at the Y she has a magnificent
many-hued butterfly tattooed on her
opulent upper arm lately she's been
losing losing losing pounds I am
concerned about that butterfly do you
think it might shrink back to a chrysalis?

June 16

newspaper newsquirk poem #2

you could write a poem a week
just from the newsquirks column
one I've saved states that in a
taiwan province petty offenders have
the option of playing mah-jong with
oldsters rather than fines or prison time
another tells of a man arrested for stealing
tools, materials and dozens of doorknobs
he confessed he took the other items
so it would look like a typical burglary
not someone just stealing doorknobs
the third was a syracuse study about
female bats the males of promiscuous
females boasted the biggest testicles
but smallest brains while the males with
faithful wives had smaller testes and larger
brains now what do you make of that
and how can all three quirks be
unified into one poem guess they can't

June 23

peepoem #5

I heard it on NPR marketplace it wasn't
april 1 someone caught a guy on camera
peeing in a reservoir think it was portland
the scene went viral to use a mod term I
don't know the details but authorities are
now draining millions of gallons millions
of dollars because "people won't drink the
water" what about the fish turtles frogs
they pee whenever what about the ducks
geese gulls notorious for droppings a public
info campaign would no doubt cost less
than flushing away drinking water but who
notices public info campaigns anyway also
what about those fish turtles frogs flopping
in the mud if this is true it should be bigger
news now will someone tell me where I can
pee to have the book I'm about to publish go
viral it's full of bullshit and will cost about
twenty-five bucks inexpensive eco-fertilizer

June 30

Ypool poem #9

no I don't swim laps I just swim
and when it's crowded try to
dodge the thrashers and splashers
and the ones who hit the end POW
with their projectile somersaults

July 7

scampoem #1

NO HIGH FRUCTOSE CORN SYRUP
blares the label of my hunt's ketchup
other brands are catching on though not
the hawaiian punch at an enos park bash
that was its first ingredient I read labels
the high fruc folk are frantic they're
lobbying to have h f corn syrup (so
cheap for them so bad for us) labeled
corn sugars "in the interest of consumer
information" we have the info already
thanks we're onto your tricks if you
succeed in bamboozling the FDA we'll
now reject anything labeled corn sugars
that means rejecting almost everything in
the supermarket which is the case already
just look at the fine print you can't call it
food we'll all waste away from malnu-
trition while growing fat fat fat fat fatter

July 13

wordspoen #4

I'd like to write something using
chalcedony such a strange strong word
it's a chert says daughter #3 who knows
everything worth knowing a chert like
jasper semi precious stones tolkien uses
it in his poem "errantry" with all its
astonishing double inner and outer
rhymings he pairs it with ebony but
chalcedony doesn't come into my daily
life and I usually write on dailiness
maybe I need a little more chalcedony
in my pocket maybe some jasper too

July 21

lakepoem #8

garrett, two, got a fish hook
through his finger when he grabbed
his brother's line had to go to the
e.r. I was seven when a kid whipped
his line back and snagged me right
between the nostrils I blubbered back
to the cottage carrying the fishpole
the doctor had to cut it out I don't know
what lured garrett I was caught on worms

July 28

thoughtpoem #8

I wonder if I will go
into old age still thinking
about things such as the
opposite of “inept” is “apt”

August 4

griefpoem #11

living with grief it is
good to do quiet
homely things washing
dishes by hand taping up
a tear in a child's favorite
story book dipping oars
slowly while you gaze at
the water's parallel eddies
swirling gently away

August 11

mozartpoem #6

these weekly offerings seem often to
include music environment excrement
remember the guy and the reservoir
also things that strike me as funny or
bizarre here's an item no not from the
tabloids but the august british guardian
seems a plant in germany is saving
\$1200 a month by playing mozart to
sewage treuenbrietzen's chief operator
anton stucki says we think the secret is
in the vibrations which penetrate every-
thing including the water the sewage and
the cells it creates a certain resonance that
stimulates the microbes and helps them
work better break down waste faster stucki
believes mozart works because the composer
managed to transpose universal laws of
nature into his music now I don't deny that
mozart will improve anything from babies
to babushkas but what intrigues me is whose
idea was it how was permission gained how
is it measured and the scientist in me asks
about control groups did other plants try
sousa the beatles gregorian chant I know cows
like mozart while rock curdles their milk maybe
it's not such a leap from bovines to bacteria

August 18

lincolnpoem #8

american friends living in germany
these past thirty years visited last week
we did the lincoln circuit john was
contemplating the statued group in the
museum's reception rotunda a welcomer
said to him do you know who they are?
of course said john it's george washington
and his family I'm not stupid you know
to her credit the welcomer doubled with mirth

August 25

publicationpoem #2

today is d day or rather cb day the
last day I have to make any changes
in my cow book before it's off to
the printer 550 pages yet all I want
to do is read elizabeth kolbert in
the new issue of the new yorker
on how we slept with neanderthals

p.s. if the above sounds like an ad
it isn't you'll be getting a real blitz
in a while and I'm hoping this IT
publication will run an evocative
and perceptive article about how I
started this book when I was fifteen
o how remarkable o what perseverance
but I'm not counting cow tits

*Volume I is now published. Find out
about it at the end of this book!*

September 1

lakepoem #16

as a kid I spied this sight several times in
shallow reedy water of a small wisconsin
lake a seething black platter made up of
wriggling tiny bodies each smaller than
a finger joint each a perfect replica of the
two huge sleek whiskered bullheads father
and mother slowly circling the periphery
protecting their young I've never seen this
in our small vermont lake but yesterday
ashley and andrew raced to tell everyone
come quick come quick but by the time
I arrived the school of babes had moved on
perhaps we'll spot them again even if not
I know these kids will treasure seeing the
bullhead family all their lives, as have I

September 8

lakepoem # 17

the lake is so still
it's sacrilege to mar it
with my dawn swim's
ripples

September 15

9/11 poem

sunday morning driving south on
fifth I was stopped at capitol by
a cavalcade of 1000? 2000? 3000?
motorcyclists streaming past two three
four abreast some with flags big and
small most multi-passengered, sidecars
crammed they started from where?
going where? I turned off my engine
settled back watched thought of the
anniversary thought of my personal
anniversary my daughter not with me
to enjoy this gone almost a year now
I waited listened to a bach chaconne

September 22

monkeypoem #2

we took the grandkids to the
movies sunday saw rise of the
planet of the apes it was as good
as the reviews predicted what
refreshing car wrecks what a
stage the golden gate made
for those magnificent beasts
or dare we call them beasts
and it had its effect oh yes it
had its effect afterwards wyatt
scuttled across the asphalt lot
on all fours spoke in a strange
gibberish nor did he rise from
his simian stance except to swing
on the chandeliers and banisters
we lost a boy for hours but gained
a most able and entertaining ape

September 29

foodpoem #5

the peanut butter jar is empty
how can anyone living alone
survive without peanut butter
peanut butter and milk the writers
of the pentateuch (plural because
moses must've had help with the
spelling) anyway they write of the
land of milk and honey they never
define what manna is I think
the lord was feeding the children
of israel peanut butter in disguise

October 6

canalpoem #1

if you need a stressfree interlude try
a french canal trip our little craft with
just our family is self sufficient we
glide along the quiet waters four miles
an hour green banks thick trees an
occasional green field with pure white
cows warm sunshine cheese wine in the
fridge baguettes from the nearby village
three bikes on board for towpath riding
yes we'll pick you up at the next lock
true the bunks are only plank-wide
softer though stars blaze overhead
seldom another boat a few fisherfolk on
the banks we take turns to steer the big
excitement is the locks: 38 of them many
we have to open ourselves signaling for
the green light by what we call the noodle
it hangs a space ahead then the gates slowly
open often by our own power two of us hop
out turn huge horizontal wheels we steer in
close the gates the water gushes up raising us
like a cork our sides nearly touch the mossy
walls gates open we float out at a higher level
give the lock tender (if there is one) a tiny
bottle of whiskey green ahead green behind
a good green family an occasional dinner out
at a friendly french cafe a pure green heaven

October 13

**The New One
for Jackie Jackson**

*This week's poem is by guest poet Lola Lucas
who has written about my The Round Barn,
Volume I, soon to be published.*

Thank you, Lola! JJ

Jackie brings her newest to my car
For me to coo over –
“Oh, such a big one!”
She's had a dozen, I wonder
If she can really remember
All their names. Her proud
Exhausted smile bespeaks
A long hard labor.

Swaddled in brown paper
Her latest manuscript
Nestles in her arms.
Comparisons of books to births.
So trite. So true.

She doesn't pop them out each year.
Some took decades of gestation.
She has a brood of children's books,
Writing manuals, round barn stories
Of growing up on a dairy farm.

The secret of writing?
Set pen to paper then PUSH!

– Lola Lucas

October 20

chickenfeed poem #1

friends a chicken is an omnivore needs
protein that's why so many kids' books
of earlier centuries are heavy on boys
hunting and trapping – pitch that dead
bunny in the chicken yard when bugs are
under the snow my daughter and son-in-law
keep a 5-gallon covered can in their trunk
beat the crows to fresh nevada roadkill
throw the rabbit lizard vole to their flock
(in a covered yard picked beetle clean – hawks
coyotes like protein too, so chickens can't run
free) the gang falls on any delicacy with joy
makes short work of the treat but one day in
comes a huge furry dead raccoon oh oh oh
an enemy! consternation! the hens huddle in
a corner the brave rooster shields his harem
with widespread wings – but when the danger
doesn't move hour after hour they gradually
venture forth finally realize they have a banquet
the happy feast lasts days and days and days

October 27

bicyclepoem #3

a guy was interviewed on NPR who'd
built a full size wooden bicycle one that
really works he said the chain was the
hardest part why'd he do it? a friend bet he
couldn't now I'd like the friend to challenge
him further try making one of spaghetti

November 3

chickenfeed poem #2

that story I told two weeks ago about
chickens eating meat well I've been
swamped with chicken stories they are
good press my friend jack knows a farmer
east of town whose chicken coop is an
old school bus in the morning the flock
walks one by one down the chicken ladder
from the school bus door (passenger side)
spends the day pecking up bugs and fly larvae
then all walk back up the chicken ladder into
the bus the farmer drives to a different spot
in his fields and next day the chickens repeat
the activity scouring an unpecked plot can't
you just see a gary larson cartoon an ancient
school bus a chicken head in each window
the farmer driving his expectant migrant crew
tomorrow to fresh woods and pastures new?

November 10

vachel lindsay poem #1

today we crossed the lindsay bridge
today we crossed the lindsay bridge
today we crossed the lindsay bridge
we were among the first
the streetlamps are so sleek and black
the streetlamps are so sleek and black
the streetlamps are so sleek and black
they surely must be versed
we thought we ought to tender thanks
to those who worked so hard
to thus repair our stately bridge
two lanes no boulevard
but strong and simple, paving fresh,
the sweet-shaped rails the same
so welcome back dear lindsay bridge
our local hearts reclaim

November 17

chickenfeed poem #3

and then there's the rooster in the
backyard hedge between us and
the neighbors he ate from the dog
dishes at their backdoor and ours
grew into a bold and brassy chap
who dashed out to peck our kids
in the sandpile that's how he got
his name boldpick is coming! they
screamed scattering boldpick is
coming! when he began to draw
blood I said to my neighbor you
have to do something about your
rooster he's a menace MY rooster
marge exclaimed we thought he was
YOUR rooster! we figured he'd been
someone's easter chick escaped more
likely kicked out to fend for himself
when no longer cute just a bother
he'd found our mutual hedge comfy
safe good pickins established his
territory he wasn't safe any longer
though – the neighbors served him for
sunday dinner admittedly a bit tough

November 23

phonemoem #1

the phone just rang it was newt gingrich
without preamble the voice said “this is
newt gingrich – as someone who loves
america” – at which I hung up I can think
of a number of things newt gingrich might
love but america would not be on the list

December 1

catalpaforest story part 1

near the wisconsin farm we lived on
we kids at exploratory age followed
the crick discovered upstream a grove
of trees planted incongruously in rows
strange trees catalpa trees we named it
the catalpa forest played there for years
town kids biked out for mud fights in
the stream we choked on smoke from
the long cigar-like pods we launched
downstream flotillas of curled willow
leaves now our farm all neighboring
farms are leveled replaced by factories
stripmalls warehouses rows of concrete
storage lockers intertwining highways
but that small stand of trees probably
a hundred thirty years old is still leafing
out every summer dropping pods in the
fall recently I found a way in marveled
at the trunks thin gaunt healthy oldsters
people speeding by on I-90 just across
the crick don't notice this green island
if they do they have no idea what the
little woods meant to many kids for
many years it meant something to some
grownups too how those trees happened
to be planted I'll tell that story another
time for now I'm just glad they were

December 8

swanpoem #1

a lone swan patrolled this little stretch of
the ohio for five years until he disappeared
some say they saw him flying south in the
company of two trumpeter swans so my
friends' small home right on the bank
comes rightfully by its name swan cottage
no name is needed though for the contents
betray it swans everywhere large small
in between ceramic ones china glittering
cut glass bronze aluminum a petit point
pillow advertising swan soap swan pictures
grace the walls some by locals swans
painted on maple leaves and most charming
of all two swans atop a black grand piano
music box the keys tinkling out swan lake
rather out of tune while two swans on the lid
perform a perfect *pas de deux* such swan surfeit
might be monotonous if it weren't for the fun
of finding yet another variation and then there is
the relief of a little rubber ducky in the bathtub

December 15

catalpaforest poem concluded

you could buy your way out of the civil war
pay someone two hundred dollars to take
your place the farmer on the road near us
(well before my grampa was born) did so
his replacement was killed. many years later
a maimed ex-soldier – eye an empty hole leg
missing below the knee – limped by with a cart
of catalpa shoots catalpa makes strong fence
posts the farmer felt so guilty he bought the
entire cartload “but did he feel guilty enough
to plant those shoots himself?” the elderly
informant told my grandpa “no, I was his hired
man and I planted every one in rows down by
the crick it was a miserable hot job!” so that is
the forest we kids discovered and played in so
happily growing up it is still there beside the
stream ancient but flourishing a massy green
oasis amid warehouses fast food the rush of I-90

December 22

My Gift

*This poem was written by my mother,
Vera Wardner Dougan, to my father,
for their first Christmas together, 1924.*

If I could give to you one only gift
To hold forever, in remembrance of me
T'would be the peace that enters in the heart
When love comes there to dwell, all silently.

I'd wrap it in the silver of the moon,
And tie it with the distant purple haze;
I'd seal it with a baby's little smile,
And send it so, to gladden all your days.

December 29

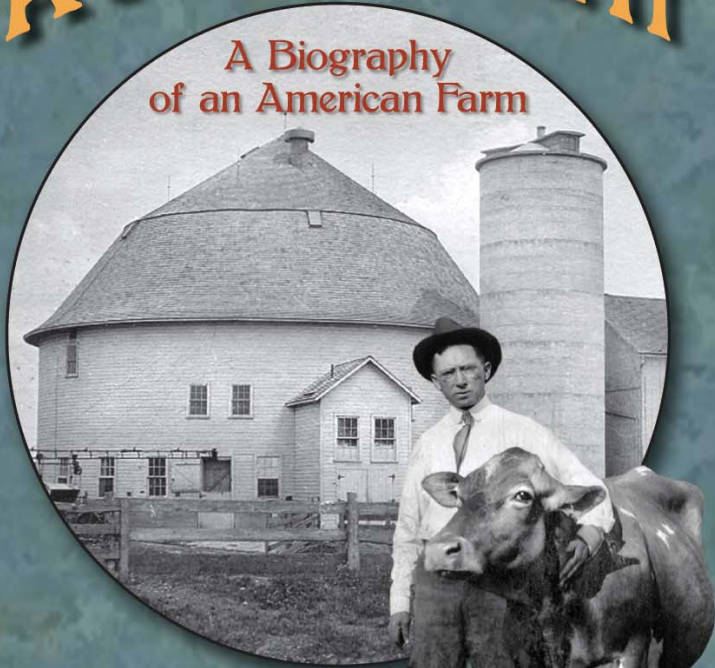
readingpoem #7

*A recent letter from my sister Pat
relates this tale about our oldest sister
Joan as a kid.*

joan read all the time – do you recall
when we were parked in front of the
post office I don't remember quite
how it began but I have a clear picture
of our sister emerging from the p.o. her
eyes on the book feeling with her feet
her way down the steps never taking her
eyes away from the pages in front of her
and then watching her walk toward our
car still reading crossing the sidewalk
coming to the curb and with one hand
holding the book in front of her face
groping with her other hand for the
car door handle then yanking the door
open the only problem was she had felt
her way to the car closely parked behind
us where the owner had been sitting in his
front seat leaning his elbow on the window
sill watching joan approach with her arm
outstretched like a blind man – when she
grabbed the handle and pulled, the amused
man either pretended to fall out of his car
or really did fall out only then did joan
take her eyes off the book she was reading

THE Round Barn

A Biography
of an American Farm



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Announcing the publication of Jackie Jackson's life work: *The Round Barn, Volume I*

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“A Biography of an American Farm.”

—from PROLOGUE



Jackie is fifteen. She sits on the arm of Grampa's easy chair. She rumples his thinning hair and shapes it into a Kewpie-doll twist. This is a ritual, with all the grandchildren, ever since they were little. Grampa laughs with his stomach, silently.

An idea strikes Jackie. She takes a pencil and paper. These are always near Grampa, for Grampa is deaf. They are always near Jackie, too, for Jackie writes things down. Maybe she has this habit from writing for Grampa all her life. Being his ears. She writes, "Grampa, I am going to write you a book. I am going to call it, *The Round Barn*."

Grampa studies the paper. He takes a long time to ponder it. Then he nods slowly. "*The Round Barn*," he says. "Yes, the round barn will have a lot to say." He crinkles all over his face and laughs silently. He is pleased, she can tell.

I can write," Jackie says to herself, "what the round barn sees. Not just what I know it sees. But what Grampa knows it sees. And Daddy. The milkmen. The cows. All of us! For the round barn is in the middle of us all, and it sees everything. It is the center."

For ordering information, visit the website:

www.roundbarnstories.com

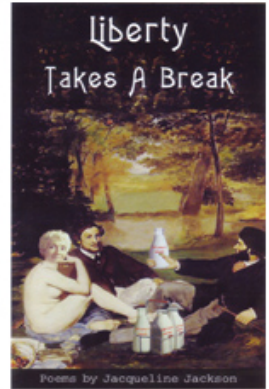
Previous collections of poetry
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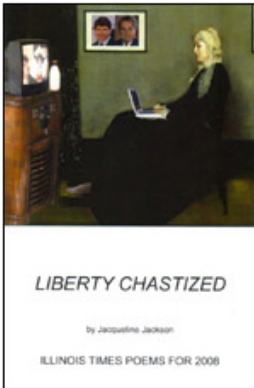
2005



2006



2007



2008



2009



2010

If you are missing any of these previous publications
and would like one, please contact the author.

Thanks to J. Mitch Hopper (Custom Video Systems Co.) who
designed and saw to it that the 2011 Liberty volume was
produced, and to Roland Klose who first asked for these poems.

