

# LIBERTY



# GOES GOTHIC

*A collection of poetry by  
Jacqueline Dougan Jackson  
Illinois Times - 2012*



# The Caste System on the Dougan Farm

The "Haves"



are generous to



the "Have Nots"



## **A Word From the Author**

### **Dedication**

This year it's to the hard working friends who have helped put together Volume 2 of *The Round Barn* (see shameless promotion, end of this *Liberty*). Reg Gibbons, Roland Klose, Jeremy Schmidt, Megan Ryan, J. Mitch Hopper, Rodd Whelpley, Tom McBride, and many others who read and critiqued. As well as the cast of thousands who contributed material. Thanks to you all! Now on to final volume No. 3.

### **Liberty's History**

I suggested to Roland Klose, then editor of *Illinois Times*, that there be a poem in the weekly paper. He agreed, and acclaimed poet John Knoepfle wrote for two years, till he was ready to stop. By then the feature was popular and Roland urged the job onto me, though I protested I wasn't a poet. I agreed to try; this volume represents my eighth year. Following John Knoepfle's lead I have used little punctuation and capitalization. This assignment has been rewarding in too many ways to list: but one is, it's made me a stronger listener and observer.

### **Cow Connection**

Sam B. Davis designed the first volume, myself on the cover as the Statue of Liberty, holding aloft a bottle of milk. That gave us our name and theme: every cover since (Mitch Hopper took over at the 4th volume) has had a well-known art work that includes me and milk. Joke covers. This was particularly hard for 2010, right after my daughter's death—I didn't want a joke. My daughter Elle suggested Tenniel and that fit: a solemn Alice, perplexed, even vacant. There is no direct cow connection in the *Libertys*, except that I've been simultaneously working on the history of our family farm, so that farm-themed poems come up regularly in my weekly offerings, stimulated by this other work, plus my heightened observations of agriculture and the world at this present time.



*January 5, 2012*

**newyearspoem 2012**

let's praise old ladies' beautiful bodies  
I see them daily in the Y shower room  
myself included some of us gaunt sinewy  
some with rolls of fat some in between  
but most with rounded bellies gnarled  
toes most a scar or two a lump or two  
a limp or two but all just right just right  
as we scrub under the hot spray  
moms come through for the next session  
dragging by the hand their round-bellied  
chubbies the babes hanging back to  
stare at us with wide eyes my new year's  
wish to you, small ones, is that you will  
grow old your bodies still spry and that  
the world you inherit will be habitable  
and hospitable for all your beautiful bodies

*January 12, 2012*

**featherspoem # 6**

it deceives, this winter warmth twice now  
I've heard a familiar ck-ck-ck high on my back  
porch and known it was my old tenant the  
cardinal—when I looked there was the little  
green wife up under the eaves surveying  
the nest the robins had usurped last spring  
and remodeled with gobbets of mud is she  
planning to get here first, repossess, renovate?  
no no no little bird it's too soon there are still  
cold blasts to come, plummeting temperatures  
I haven't yet scattered your sunflower seeds



*January 19, 2012*

**grief poem #8**

when anyone says “how are you?” —a common  
greeting—I reply cheerfully “holding up” —that  
seems an acceptable answer and it’s true.

I needn’t elaborate that there are often some  
pleasures, even once in a while a moment of  
joy though I am never a blink away from tears

*January 26, 2012*

**bookletter poem #1**

today came a lengthy missive with a  
check the writer is seventy she starts  
“I am looking forward to reading your  
round barn book I grew up on a farm  
in wrightstown wisconsin we lived  
on county line road P our small  
three bedroom house had no indoor  
plumbing no running water there was  
mom and dad and eight children our  
house was in brown county and our  
barn was across the road in outagamie  
county we had to haul all the water  
we used from the barn in milk cans  
taking a bath on saturday night was  
an adventure we all wanted to be first  
because we all had to use the same  
water—” I will write this woman back  
send her a book tell her she has already  
started her own story keep on keep on

*February 2, 2012*

**phonepoem #3**

when I call a business a library or  
almost any number not a friend  
a robot voice will say listen carefully  
for our menu has changed then come  
seven choices none the entrée I need  
if I could hack into those kitchens I'd offer  
three selections appetizer first: "if you want  
to jump through a dozen onion rings and  
after ten minutes be back where you started  
push 1" the main dish: "if you crave a  
live human knucklebone push 2 good luck"  
dessert is last; push 3 if you want to tell  
all menus to go fricassee themselves  
perhaps I'd offer 4: a conspiratorial voice  
would croak, "the number of the rice den  
down the alley is 808-xxxx have a nice day"

February 9, 2012

## iceman poem #4

there must be many an iceman one  
lies in his tent near the  
south pole a hundred years now  
they left him there with two others  
brought back the sleeping bag of  
one who said he was going out  
and disappeared into the blizzard  
its seam is slit at the bottom for his  
gangrenous foot you can see it  
in cambridge also on display is  
captain robert falcon scott's diary  
open to its final entry trailing off  
for gods sake look after our  
people the world has as many  
despairs as it has those to despair  
I think of this on the anniversary of  
his dragging sledges at forty below to  
find over the goal a norwegian flag  
he left a toddler for others to raise  
suggested he be a naturalist his wish  
was granted the son founded and  
funded wildfowl trusts I saw a billion  
birds at slimbridge on the severn the  
ornithologist's autobiography  
begins I am a totally happy man

*Note: I wasn't satisfied with this poem and asked my poet-friend Rodd Whelpley for a critique. He gave valuable comments, then jotted, "I added Scott's full name because of 'falcon'--that was too delicious to forego, but might be overkill. I like the poem's connections and disconnections. The father frozen in despair. The son winged in his happiness. The perceived failure. The perceived success. There is both in the world and both in the poem. Maybe both in everything? Don't know if the poem suggests that idea, but it embodies it."*

*February 16, 2012*

**advicepoem #1**

in 1924 my grandfather writes  
his freshman son about  
that son's new possession:  
"Regarding your car, cut it out.  
You are better off without it.  
What you need is to develop  
quiet strength and poise of  
mind and character. The car  
tends to develop just the  
opposite qualities. Walk and  
think and grow great. I do not  
want you to use a car in  
Madison. Sell it and walk."

*February 23, 2012*

**northfifthstreet poem #14**

ugly things can and do happen on  
any street on ours my daughter  
in her teens was on the sidewalk  
she noticed a puppy start across  
the roadway then saw a truck  
coming fast it swerved deliberately  
in order to run over the little beast  
the schoolyard children didn't notice  
but my kid has never forgotten

*March 1, 2012*

**poem on poems #1**

my poet friend trims the crust from  
his twenty-first polyptonic pie ready  
to slide into the literary oven gathers  
the tailings rolls them out again  
enough for another he decides  
rolls the scraps again and yet again  
the pie tins grow smaller smaller  
“john,” I say, “your last will be no larger  
than a praecisionic patty-pan filled  
with one-stanza schmaltz.” “ho ho ho  
get on with your life,” says john.  
“it will be the tastiest ever baked!”

*March 8, 2012*

**farmerpoem #11**

maybe I've told you this  
before but my dad says  
a country kid can run  
through a pasture and  
never step on anything  
while a city kid can pick  
his way through a pasture  
and step on everything



*March 16, 2012*

**prairiepoem #9**

a tranquil afternoon today  
burning the prairie warm sun  
low breeze a thin line of fire  
spreading across the brushhogged  
acre leaving black ash behind  
my daughter assisted this burn  
two springs ago but we never  
got back to see the prairie in  
glorious bloom it is one of my  
many regrets yet regrets do not  
nourish and are best squelched  
just like we beat down the flames  
when edges begin to creep toward  
any hazardous out-of-bounds area

*March 22, 2012*

**globalwarming poem #3**

if it's 88 in  
springfield  
on the ides  
of march  
what's it  
going to be  
in mid-july?

*March 29, 2012*

**timothy poem #1**

our folks bought us the world book  
a handsome set of volumes a useful  
and absorbing reference once I  
set out to read the whole thing  
bogged down at aardvark or was it  
aardwolf realizing it was an impossible  
goal besides both beasts soon flagged in  
others' interest as conversation topics  
why do I three-quarter-century later  
keep working at unattainable goals even  
taking on new ones don't I also recall  
myself at world-book age trying to cut  
our new lawn sown to timothy (why that  
occurred--the timothy--is too long a tale to  
tell) but I attacked the task with scissors  
managed only a small space on a hot day  
before giving up my thumb flaming  
the green vastness still nearly intact  
is this universal in our spirits a genetic  
need or is it just me maybe some others  
who butt bruised heads against walls the  
dents more ours than in the uncaring barriers

April 5, 2012

## waking thoughts poem

*This poem was recently emailed  
to Illinois Times anonymously.*

*I gained the sender's ok to print  
it; altered it only to fit the space.*

*I also took the liberty to add an  
obvious line.*

eight days to go till payday  
eight days to go till payday  
negative \$121 in checking  
eight days to go till payday  
cable's turned off; car on empty  
eight days to go till payday  
five kids to feed five kids who  
may not know they're poor  
they'll soon figure it out  
eight days to go till payday  
what else can I give up?  
what else can I give up?  
eight days to go till payday  
the weight's too much  
the wait's too much—there  
aren't any answers no options  
no secret passage out of here  
eight days to go till payday  
tomorrow it'll just be seven

*April 12, 2012*

**farmpoem #13**

have I already  
reminded you?  
my dad says when  
oak leaves are big  
as a squirrel's ear  
it's time  
to plant corn

*April 19, 2012*

**farmpoem #14**

this old ledger probably 1900  
maybe earlier it's from a box  
of stuff from my folks' house  
which was full of stuff from  
my grandparents' house I have  
it all I'm trying to sift discard a  
slow job for instance this ledger  
shows only names and dates of  
the breeding of long dead cattle  
no use at all but how can you  
pitch out a volume whose inside  
cover prints such helpful info  
(courtesy of the publisher) as  
a ten-ton freight car has the  
carrying capacity of 60 barrels of  
whiskey or that it takes 5 pounds  
of seed to sow an acre of parsnips?

*April 26, 2012*

**scavenger poem #1**

demi, you'd like my sandwich this noon  
the bread is from someone's finished meal  
at st. pat's fish fry last night raw onion ditto  
the well-flavored beef slice I slid off john  
knoepfle's plate at a university do two nights  
ago sneaked it home in an elegant cloth napkin  
(washed today, ready for return) mayo? well  
just the best but here's your particular passion  
you'd have gathered them for us were you here  
the thick tangle of greens all from the yard  
wild chive tender daggers of dandelion leaves  
clover-shaped "sour grass" (sorrel) and violets  
white and lavender a treat for eye as well as  
tongue it is a truly scavenged sandwich you  
once said of such a meal of your own creation  
"I am my mother's daughter." did some bits of  
grass get in by mistake? probably but small and  
slender there is enough for two I long for you  
to be here eating with me on this sunny back  
porch and I must quit writing this or the lump  
in my throat will not allow me to swallow

*May 3, 2012*

**northfifthstreet poem #17**

I'm glad not to be living in one of those  
padlocked compounds west or southwest  
of town I'm glad to be in enos park where  
I'm allowed to hang out a pillow case that  
drinks in the fragrance of sun and wind to  
perfume my slumbers where I can pin up  
a row of voluminous drawers offensive to  
the world which world being here the  
schoolkids across the fence they ask me to  
retrieve a ball or can they pick the tulips  
so what if they snicker at my clothesline  
display chances are they never notice  
chances are someone in their own yard is  
hanging out their own skimpies someone  
humming with clothespins in her mouth



*May 10, 2012*

**clout (clothing) poem #1**

may is here I'm missing my  
elderly friend jessie with her  
crown of white hair and spritely  
ways lived on a farm in dorset  
she frequently quoted her mum  
("ketchup is an insult to the cook")  
("men are a necessary nuisance")  
one quote was an old english rhyme:  
"ne'er cast a clout till may be out"  
we debated its meaning—do we  
not moth-ball our woolies till  
the month be over this fits with  
dips in english weather I like jessie's  
other reasoning better we can cast  
our clouts when the hawthorne, the  
may tree, blossoms the madrigals  
agree it's in the month of maying  
that each lad is with his bonny lass  
upon the greeny grass and how many  
clouts think you they're wearing?

*May 17, 2012*

**bookpoem #8**

if you want a copy of  
*winnie the pooh* in russian  
let me know I also have  
*winnie ille pu* and  
*pierre lapin* and maybe  
one in yiddish if I can  
find it, if that's where  
your interest lies

*May 24, 2012*

## **barnpoem #1**

I suppose I should write a eulogy but I shed not a single tear when the round barn went down two weeks ago nor when the two standing silos were pulverized a week later it was inevitable once our group to save it splintered and the bad guys bought the property without telling us gave the barn a silly name not befitting its meaning to many lives both bovine and human had we kept the barn it would now be on I-90 graciously greeting travelers to wisconsin the town of beloit sneaked in to do the deed they were afraid of protests I guess but we would only have taken pictures we tried then to save the “aims” lettered on the central silo we had a stoughton farmer prepared to welcome a chunk of philosophic statuary carry on “life as well as a living” but the town didn’t wait for us well my books are the monument you can buy them from me cheap or I will give them to you google my name or roundbarnstories you can view the two bare silos on twitter still it is a shame my youngest daughter put it well she wrote at the news “a sad end to a dignified icon”

*May 31, 2012*

**diarypoem #1: blink**

my mother burned years of diaries  
before her first child was born she  
told me later that if anything had  
happened to her she didn't want  
aunt ida or aunt lillian prying into  
her most intimate thoughts what a  
treasure we have missed my mother's  
prose would have been jeweled with  
poetry her thoughts however personal  
would have been so precious to share  
she later kept one diary (that I know of)  
only five or six pages in the middle of  
an old unused daybook she must have  
picked up then mislaid but for those  
few days I glimpsed my small sibs and  
me picnicking on the lawn a trip to the  
dressmaker's a problem with cleaning  
curtains a tender word about my father  
then silence once when I was in the  
back pasture on my horse the night dark  
a passenger train whipped by on the  
tracks several cars brightly lit lives  
going on inside then abruptly darkness  
silence before and after it was like that

*June 7, 2012*

### **ashespoem #3**

last week walker church over 100 years old  
burned down a monstrous blaze all over the  
internet five firefighters hurt one bad likely  
cause lightning the church community rallied  
went ahead the next day feeding the homeless  
on schedule 200 people came walker was more  
than a church the congregation of all colors  
faiths backgrounds a first to openly welcome  
gays we had buddists wiccans atheists parolees  
professional folk people rich poor in-between  
—and how we could sing! the service began  
with a half hour of free singing the numbers  
shouted from the floor the pastor walked among  
us so we could discuss his sermon I say we for  
this was my church in minneapolis, demi's  
for twenty years her supportive community  
she a support for others too at her memorial the  
place was packed balconies draped with  
her amazing colorful quilts their unique  
designs her whimsical stick figures dancing  
she was beloved when I emailed her sisters  
my second daughter replied, "Oh no! What  
a loss! And even worse, firefighters hurt! . .  
well, Demi's ashes are mingled now with the  
ashes of the church she loved, she will be there  
when so many people she loved, and who loved  
her, will cause something new to rise up.  
We can think of them lifting her up, too."

*June 14, 2012*

### **downtown poem #3**

you know that tall building 6th and monroe  
café brio on the ground floor maybe you've  
noted they're stripping the fake façade with  
a crane well that facing went on in the 70s  
to beautify the structure make it mod from  
the second floor to the top a chic metal grid  
actually rows of metal boxes open ended  
to let in the light hard to describe I could draw  
a picture anyway it didn't take some thousand  
local starlings a week to realize they'd received  
a highrise hotel individual rooms safe from sun  
sleet wind rain snow even the occasional hawk  
open enough to chat with all their neighbors  
coming in to roost catch up on the day's doings  
raucous conversations I took my capital campus  
evening classes to enjoy the conviviality but  
it was a vexing problem to the beautifiers they  
solved it by draping the entire building with a  
net yes netting to keep the starlings out this  
worked okay until the famed icestorm of '78  
that coated every net-strand with ice thick as a  
thumb the net now weighed tons it gave up slid  
down the building in a great glittering square  
right to the sidewalk made prisoner anyone in  
haines and esseck stationers nobody could get out  
or in I was always on the starlings' side I quick  
gathered a class to come enjoy this spectacle too

June 21, 2012

**foundpoem #16**

*Elsbeth, 3rd grade, left this in her mother's typewriter, I don't think purposely to be read. (She often monkeyed about on my machine.) The grammar is deliberate for she spoke correctly. I see this as a youngest-child heartfelt expression. JJ*

a big wind blow,  
a small wind blow too.  
big, small, both blow.

Free.

No one tell wind when to blow.  
Big wind don't tell smaller wind  
when to blow,  
Smaller wind don't tell smallest wind  
when to blow.  
Every wind blow when it want to.

*June 28, 2012*

**downtown poem # 4**

I discovered in my teens (yes a slow learner)  
if you did a devious deed officially enough  
boldly enough no one would question your  
actions this proved true at the old state capitol  
art fair many years ago I took scissors and a  
step ladder to the lincoln hotel 5th and capitol  
my young daughter cringed on the other side  
of the street shrouded by the methodist church  
she didn't want people to think she was with me  
I climbed the ladder and snipped off a tattered  
huge green awning with abe's benign face in  
its middle pedestrians walked by but no one  
paid any heed to the theft of a large art work  
later, on a dark december dawn following the  
springtime canvas salvation, two daughters and I  
huddled catty corner across the street from the  
hotel it was ten below a few others shivered in  
nearby doorways at 8:30 a.m. muffled blasts  
exquisitely brought down the historic hotel not a  
brick in the street a bleat of cheers went up from  
those who'd braved the cold to attend this civic  
event perhaps another awning was lost in the  
rubble but I'd presented my canvas to the lincoln  
papers project at sangamon state university and  
it was hanging safely in cullom's or becky's office



*July 5, 2012*

**springfield bad-decision poem #4**

O sing our dolorous lamentation  
O hear ye gods of all creation  
a city spot, a corner green  
is soon no longer to be seen  
chain saws will rent the dawning calm  
the toads and rabbits will be gone  
the frisky squirrel the scaly snake  
all disappeared and just to make  
a giant store that we don't need  
for this a thousand trees will bleed  
for processed food not fit to eat  
high fructose syrup hormoned meat  
more asphalt will pour o'er the ground  
more cars will belch exhaust around  
O tell what politics are near  
that we're not privileged to hear  
what corporation gave a holler  
who knelt to the almighty dollar  
at least two aldermen were firm  
O muse pray make the others squirm  
our enos park, sam, knows you stood  
and cast your vote for griffin wood

*July 12, 2012*

**downtown poem #5**

while on a roll of downtown drama  
consider the then newish bank at 5th &  
washington in the good ol' days of ssu  
I was co-teaching with marian levin  
writing and movement our class of ten  
women met anywhere we moved studied  
movement then wrote about it today at  
the bank gripping our assignment we  
ignored each other attract no attention  
one item choose a teller line synchronize  
every move of the person two ahead  
scratch an ear scratch a bum yawn stare  
vacantly shift feet another is mount the  
tall lobby stairs unusually—backward  
two step use your imagination—a third  
follow a man woman child and walk  
or skip like each does all these not in  
concert you understand well next thing  
we knew we were rounded up evicted the  
bank prexy had called the ssu prexy what  
the hell is going on we were forbidden  
ever to return but got some good writing  
and insights do you know men usually  
walk with legs farther apart than women  
and sort of rolling it follows also creative  
movement diminishes with age except for  
the very old who can be quite inventive

*July 19, 2012*

**anecdote poem #7**

an out of town friend  
new to my three-year-old  
beckoned her to him “jilly  
I’ll tell you a secret” she  
bent an anticipatory ear  
he whispered “you are a  
very pretty little girl” she  
drew back astonished “but  
everybody knows that!”

*July 26, 2012*

**globalwarming poem #4**

after a non-  
winter I  
wrote if  
it's 88 in  
springfield  
on the ides  
of march  
what's it  
going to be  
in mid-july  
now we know  
we've sown  
the wind and  
are reaping  
the whirlwind  
glaciers in  
antarctica  
are sliding  
forward a  
foot an hour  
calving  
into the  
sea

*August 2, 2012*

**downtown poem #6**

we need a sonnet song something  
special to memorialize sachi our  
splendid flower shop 7th & adams  
run so graciously by yosh truly a  
golden place its name her beloved  
mother but filled with such demands  
such caring about blooms about  
persons peggy in back snipping stems  
designing fragile beauty the proprietor  
pencil in hair juggling orders maybe  
a moment for chat or soup demi  
sharing her quiet being for a while  
it sustained lives now sachi's sign  
is down yosh is freed to write of  
lives lived steadfastly of innocence  
of prisons her book a tangled wreath  
of weeds wounds winds lilies cranes  
baby's breath an overflowing sachi  
of flowers a gift of fecundity for us all

*August 9, 2012*

**nursery rhyme poem #2**

there's a murder mystery where  
real folk and nursery rhyme folk  
mingle nonchalantly together  
lots of nursery hanky panky  
as anyone who recites mother  
goose can affirm spankings thefts  
kissing girls until they cry this  
book's victim is humpty dumpty  
they test his albumen rather than  
blood stains the forensic dept  
admits a scantiness of data on  
egg dna it's all very clever but  
here is my question where in  
all literature does it ever say  
humpty dumpty is an egg I'm  
familiar with the rhyme from  
ancient texts to modern only in  
the pictures do we learn humpty's  
ethnicity by the way it's lewis  
carroll who gave us his smug and  
irascible personality and sir  
john tenniel who immortalized  
his bland and expansive looks

*August 16, 2012*

**familystory poem #14**

this family legend is so pat that  
it must be apocryphal but my  
great uncle george back around  
1890 when he graced the pulpit  
of the first methodist church in  
beloit wisconsin is purported to  
have been preaching with such  
vigor that he expelled his false  
teeth into the lap of a front-row  
parishioner whereupon he said  
with dignity will mrs stenshaw  
please pass the plate I know my  
family to be witty but that witty?  
uncle george? uncle bert yes, who  
wanted to be appointed to FDR's  
cabinet as minister in charge of  
not raising pigs, but uncle george?

*August 23, 2012*

**catdoorpoem #1**

at a home of friends seeing cats  
travel back and forth through  
their cat door I am reminded of  
my grandson now eagle scout  
college man when he was not  
yet three he crawled through a  
cat door into a strange house  
followed our directions to the  
front door while outside a  
window we held our breaths  
gesturing encouragement he  
found the lock too complicated  
managed to find the back door  
its lock was familiar he let us  
in and there lay the errant key  
we careless elders had left  
behind we didn't have to  
smash a window mark may you  
ever be so brave resourceful  
may you ever crawl successfully  
through all life's cat doors



*August 30, 2012*

**vermontpoem #21**

it was a fuzzy soft white delicate  
inch-long caterpillar two stiff black hairs  
sticking up aslant slightly behind its  
small black head-knob two more aslant a bit  
before its small black end and spaced down  
its back a line of twelve tiny black spots  
a study in white and black as it went about  
its small business that was this morning  
earlier when I awoke in the dark an owl  
duet baritone and tenor calling back and  
forth then a whole owl chorus joined  
antiphonally to sing me back to sleep

*September 6, 2012*

**vermontpoem #22**

pa, ma, six nearly grown kids reside in  
the forest behind my vermont friend's  
rural home the eight wild turkeys  
(tom, hen, jakes and jennies) find the  
pickings in irena's garden a smorgasboard  
they've eaten every blueberry elderberry  
raspberry sampled less delectable fare  
have had the effrontery to take dust baths  
between the rows they gobble in spring  
and early summer now just lots of clicks  
and clucks to keep the teenagers in line  
I ask if there's a turkey season she could  
harvest thanksgiving dinner there is but  
she'd have to get a gun learn to use it  
besides her brother once shot one in canada  
where it's always open season it was sinewy

*September 13, 2012*

**frogrince poem #1**

the grandkids came home with a  
gimmicky toy a fat green frog it  
would fit inside a tennis ball too big  
for a ping ping ball they put it in  
a glass of water it gradually melted  
you could see a prince emerging  
when I left the next day only he  
remained in the water a small ugly  
homunculus not at all princely  
I've come back now three weeks later  
he's still in the glass over the sink  
but now he almost fills it still ugly but  
big fat bloated drowned nothing like a  
fairy tale prince I preferred the frog

*September 20, 2012*

**readingpoem #7**

a british author of unique  
books for kids and adults  
william mayne has been a  
favorite in our family we  
must have a dozen of his  
works my daughter demi  
as an adult said to me  
even when you've read  
a bad mayne book  
you go around feeling  
maynish for days

*September 27, 2012*

**musicpoem #19**

thinking about great moments I was  
a timid college kid out of my depth at  
tanglewood the famous music camp  
koussevitsky ambled the paths like a  
window shopper I could spot from a  
distance take cover from any wild eyed  
fledgling composer frantically seeking  
a cellist to fill out his quartet I couldn't  
play a measure of his impossible scrawls  
one evening we students sat on blankets  
far back on the lawn paying patrons were  
seated close to the boston symphony tuning  
in the shell small shaded lights on their  
stands the concert began just then the power  
went off everyone waited stirred no lights  
returned the young lucas foss at the piano  
began to play the crowd stilled on and on  
into the night we heard bach beethoven  
chopin rachmaninoff liszt every well-known  
concerto every note from foss's memory  
not a murmur from thousands of listeners  
overhead total black made brilliant by the  
pinprick lights of celestial music stands it was  
harmony of the spheres if there is a heaven I  
thought there will be a corner in it like this

*October 4, 2012*

**speedcomp poem #1**

just heard on NPR tahiti trot by shostakovich  
he'd been dared to orchestrate in just one hour  
the popular tune tea for two did a grand jazzy job  
it reminds me of those contests that crop up  
every now and then for would-be writers write a  
novel in one hour or was it one day or one week  
I've never heard what happened to those frantic  
manuscripts as for me I work slow the book I'm  
proofreading right now was begun when I was  
fifteen well over half a century ago it might be fun  
to try one of those quick jobbies on the other hand  
this poem was scribbled in five minutes not counting  
eight minutes thought in the car and now its tidying  
up (how do you spell shostakovich) but then it's no  
tahiti trot or tea for two either I can't deny though  
that deadlines affect creative speed if not quality

*October 11, 2012*

**two by elspeth**

*at age ten*

I love kissing kittens  
under their arms

it's so lovely to  
sniff a cat who's  
been rolling  
in strawberries

*October 18, 2012*

**fortunecookie poem #2**

my chinese  
fortune cookie  
informs me “you  
have a charming  
way with words”  
then adds a gentle  
command: “write  
a letter this week”  
okey-doke



*October 25, 2012*

**furniture poem #1**

my parlor is commanded by a  
powder blue chair fairly comfy  
slightly fuzzy very ah yes very  
powder blue donated by a friend  
whose husband couldn't stand it  
those who gather in my domicile  
on our thursday writing nights  
are aesthetically divided one thing  
is certain that chair is just waiting  
to have a cup of coffee spilled on it

*November 1, 2012*

**it's a strange world poem #1**

had some interesting talk at writers group  
t'other night yosh told how a stranger came  
into the flower shop stood by her and recited  
ichi, ni, san, shi, the japanese numerals to ten  
yosh has never learned the language she was  
nonplussed she recited back at him uno, dos,  
tres, quatro, up to ten the man walked out  
peg's story echoed this she was a teen in  
peru they had to memorize the inca kings  
from first to atahualpa killed by pizarro  
peg's spouse john during a conversational  
lull at an eatery—we are now in Illinois—  
said recite for me the inca kings peg began  
manco capac, sinchi roca, lloque ypanqoi,  
when a nearby stranger stood and recited  
the kings in unison with her then returned  
to his newspaper as john might say in  
one of his poems, now what about that?

*November 8, 2012*

**cantankerous poem #11**

can't believe I'd ever admit jane austen  
has written a poor book but just finished  
mansfield park last read many years ago  
it's incredibly tedious why is edmund such  
a dope who'd ever want to marry him now  
fanny, she's too perfect and inexorably  
dull wayward maria's punishment is far  
too harsh but maybe not for a woman in  
her social class at that time and as for  
fanny's mother being a slattern in a  
mean little house with nine kids and no  
money—well, I was a slattern too with only  
four—surely fanny home for three months  
could have helped her mom create a little  
order in the chaos but no she stayed in an  
upstairs room mooning over edmund and  
beguiling her sister with glories of genteel  
living at mansfield then all those long winded  
ad nauseum speeches wringing every nuance  
out of every situation oh goody now we're  
finally getting to the climax a long time acomin'  
the love scene predicted from page one and what  
does our jane do she skips it leaves it to our  
imagination well every author is entitled to one  
bad book my recommendation is that you read  
pride and prejudice two three four times see the  
movies toss mansfield park out of the queue

*November 15, 2012*

**toothfairy letter #3**

*(more from annals of elspeth)*

Dear Tooth Fairy:

I have lost 3 molars and one eye tooth since you have last paid me and you don't have to pay me anything if you can arrange with my mom so she gives me a clothes allowance next year. Tell her I wouldn't mind if she doesn't raise my regular allowance, though it would be nice. Thank you.

*November 21, 2012*

**cosmologypoem #9**

before dawn tomorrow is the prime time  
to see leonids twenty shooting stars an  
hour predicted—one every three minutes  
with me not acclimated yet to the time  
change I may be up to watch for them  
missed the perseids in august both showers  
come around every year but every year  
is one less year for each of us a few summers  
back demi and I were in the little rowboat  
on our small vermont lake awaiting perseids  
everything still no lights no lapping waves  
no meteors only a faint brief streak at long  
intervals we talked softly drowsed—suddenly  
a seering swath of light blazed horizon to horizon  
daylight for two seconds then black--around the  
shore a synchronized gasp then a cheer only then  
did we realize scores of others were silently on  
their piers watching for perseids it was an  
unforgettable moment of communal joy was  
that your last perseid demi how I long for you  
to be here tomorrow what a reward to see even  
a faint leonid were it in your blessed company

November 29, 2012

**tails up poem #1**

the famous sculptor casting carl sandburg  
in bronze added a nubian goat to the pedestal  
(sandberg liked goats) the galesburg committee  
wants the tail down the sculptor objects I agree  
let me tell you about goats I grew up with them  
you may already know they have green yellow  
flecked eyes enigmatic horizontal black pupils  
little wattles some grow stiletto horns all have  
perky tails usually held high you can see the  
goat's bung hole yes but it's a tidy one they  
make marbles like rabbits and here's the fas-  
cinating thing a goat has no hair on the tail's  
underside just a triangle of smooth sweet skin  
our cows needed their tails washed before  
milking a cow tail can get quite grotty but not  
goats that patch of hairless flesh is warm  
pink clean (my grandson googled nubian  
goats we do sometimes check our assumptions  
he found a rear view of nubians every tail  
alert) I bet carl sandburg knew undersides of  
goats' tails I bet carl sandburg would say let  
my goat be natural if the curious notice they'll  
learn something interesting about *capra nubiana*

*December 6, 2012*

**puzzle poem #1**

when feeding the red phalarope  
often swims in circles forming a  
small whirlpool this nugget gained  
from jigzone.com I often ease into  
the day by doing the daily puzzle  
today's is the bottom of a green  
wellington boot washed up by the  
tide a sturdy little-worn sole you  
wonder how it was lost and did  
anyone go with it I use a quicky  
version only 20 pieces each takes  
about two minutes I do several  
over coffee for archives contain  
bridges beaches gardens travel cats  
usually I end with birds—interesting,  
calming, living their little bright busy  
lives I avoid screaming eagles prefer  
the red phalaropes which allow me  
to swim in circles while feeding and  
perhaps create a small whirlpool

*December 13, 2012*

**rhyming poem #18**

“It’s no poem without rhymes!”  
Amaiya, neighbor friend, avowed.  
“I have learned it now in school,  
Poems rhyme, and that’s the rule!  
So none of yours in *Illinois Times*  
Are truly verse, it’s not allowed.  
Muffet, tuffet, Jill and hill,  
You can rhyme yours if you will!”

Amaiya, love, a gift for you:  
I’ll try to make a rhyme that’s true.  
I don’t claim my verses great,  
Most don’t rhyme, it’s their sad fate.

Poets who have bees in bonnets  
May write triolets and sonnets.  
They’ll be better, don’t you know it.  
I’m just not that good a poet.



*December 20, 2012*

## **My Gift**

*This poem was written by my mother,  
Vera Wardner Dougan, to my father,  
for their first Christmas together, 1924.  
It is repeated here from last year, for it  
is so simple, appropriate, and tender.*

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 27, 2012*

**advicepoem #2**

how about let's end the year with  
a little bawdiness I just bid goodbye  
to a van of cousins passing through  
fed them at the holy land thomas's  
meal was a plateful of black olives  
nothing bawdy there also one kid  
didn't understand the ice cream  
dispenser it kept on running like  
the salt machine at the sea's bottom  
in the old tale nothing bawdy there  
either I'm getting to it my cousin told  
his daughter it was on a trip down here  
his father gave him the mandatory  
father-son talk it went, you know the  
difference between boys and girls? yes  
said scott anything else you need to know?  
no said scott and that was that I had gift  
books for them found the brief chapter  
"K P I P" where on the farm the grizzled  
day laborer gave advice to my father  
"K P I P?" repeated young ronald puzzled  
"Keep Pecker In Pants" explained the  
old fellow my dad passed that wisdom  
on to his progeny as being pretty sound  
the visiting cousins found it funny the  
young daughter with braces on her  
teeth also the clueless younger boys  
new years is a time for resolutions maybe  
I should save this poem till january first



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

Begun with a promise to Grampa when Jackie was just fifteen, *The Round Barn* is now in print! Join her as she shares farm stories spanning almost seven decades. Meet “Daddy Dougan,” Ron, Vera, and the kids: Joan, Patsy, Jackie, and Craig; the hired men, neighbors, and the town beyond. With dozens of authentic photos, this book is touching, funny, tragic, and warm – it is truly “*A Biography of an American Farm.*”

From Volume I: “Jackie Jackson throws open the Round Barn doors at the Dougan family farm to tell us an American story. She gives us a rich history of farm life at the mercy of the forces of science and the market but grounded in rock-solid Wisconsin values.”  
—Dick Durbin, U.S. Senator



From the Prologue: Jackie is fifteen when she takes a pencil and paper and writes, “Grampa, I am going to write you a book. I will call it *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.”

Volume 1 was published fall of 2011; Volume 2, December, 2012. The final volume will be out in 2013. The work is based on authentic materials: oral histories, documents, letters and diaries, so every story has its basis in fact. Nothing needs to be read in order because the books are arranged by geography, not chronology. (A time chart is included for reference.) Therefore Volume 1 deals with the silos, barns, milk house, milk routes. Volume 2 broadens to data on the Big House, where Grampa, Grama, and the hired men lived, and where Ronald, Trever, and Esther grew up. It also includes “Around the Farm,” general farm work—planting, plowing, ice harvesting, the start of hybrid seed corn, artificial breeding. Volume 3 fills out the picture: neighbors, township, town, the state, nation, and world. The theme of the book is the farm’s affect on the world, and the world’s affect on the farm. And its philosophy is Grampa’s words on the central silo: “Life as Well as a Living.”

Where do I fit? I’m a character here and there, and the reader realizes everything has to have been funneled through Jackie. But it’s not a personal memoir. It is the memoir—the biography—of the farm.

For ordering information, visit the website: [www.roundbarnstories.com](http://www.roundbarnstories.com)

What follows is a sample story from *The Round Barn*. We hope you enjoy it.

## **Barefoot**

It is early October 1914. It's suppertime. Grampa sits midway on one side of the dining-room table. Grama is at the end. Ronald and Trever and the hired men are in their places. The hired men have showered, slicked back their hair, and donned clean shirts and trousers. Fried potatoes steam in a dish on the snowy tablecloth. There are pitchers of milk, slices of cold meat, bread and butter, fresh applesauce, creamed carrots.

Grampa has said the blessing: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."

The food is passed. People begin to eat.

Grampa looks around the table. He says, "I saw a sight today I have never seen before, and I hope I shall never see again."

Everyone pauses to pay attention to Daddy Dougan.

"I went over to Tiffany very early this morning, to buy a cow," Grampa says.

Everyone nods. They know where Grampa went, and that he returned with a cow.



*Grampa returned with a cow.*

“It was still dark when I got there,” says Grampa, “and I saw a light in the barn. I went in, and saw a lantern way down at the end of the row of cows. Someone was milking there, so I walked down to see who. And as I got close, I saw it was a little lad, and he seemed to be milking in an odd sort of manner.”

Grampa has everyone’s complete attention.

“It was chilly this morning,” says Grampa. “There was frost.”

Everyone nods.

“The little lad was barefoot,” Grampa says, “and when I got up to him I saw that he was balancing himself on the milking stool with one foot, and holding the other one over the bucket” -- Grampa pushes back his chair and demonstrates -- “and milking the stream of warm milk onto that dirty little foot! And when that foot was warm, he put it down on the stall floor and raised his other dirty little foot and milked onto that one!”

The gathering is thunderstruck. Grampa looks at their stunned faces and laughs silently. His eyes disappear.

Then everyone explodes into laughter. When the hubbub dies down, Grampa shakes her head in disbelief. “Wesson, that can’t be true!”

Wesson assures her it is.

Ronald shouts into his father’s ear trumpet. “Did you say anything to anybody? Did you tell his father or mother?”

Grampa laughs and shakes his head no. “The wife asked me in for a cup of coffee and some coffeecake,” Grampa says. He adds, “I drank the coffee black.”



VOLUME TWO

THE  
**Round Barn**

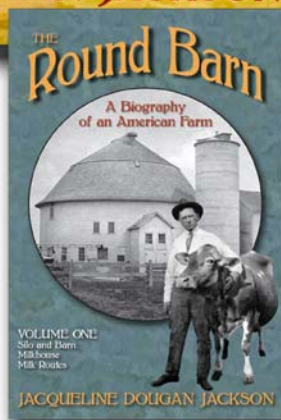
A Biography  
of an American Farm



VOLUME TWO  
The Big House  
Around the Farm

JACQUELINE DOUGAN JACKSON

The  
Round  
Barn  
Volumes  
I & II

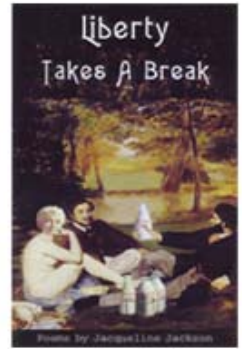




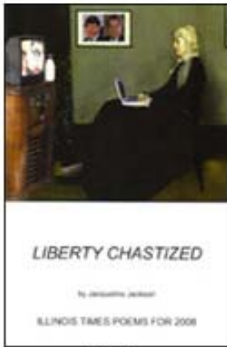
2005



2006



2007



2008

Other collections of poetry  
previously published in  
*Illinois Times*



2009



2010



2011

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 2012 *Liberty* volume was  
produced, and to Roland Klose who first asked for these poems.