

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

phonemoem #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

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, Grama 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

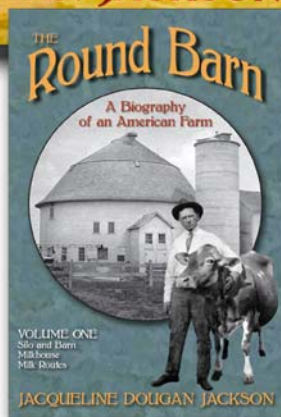
A Biography
of an American Farm



VOLUME TWO
The Big House
Around the Farm

JACQUELINE DOUGAN JACKSON

The
Round
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Volumes
I & II

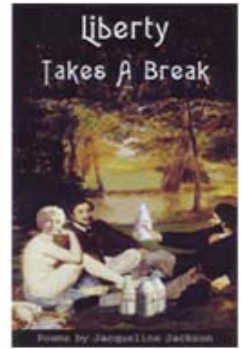




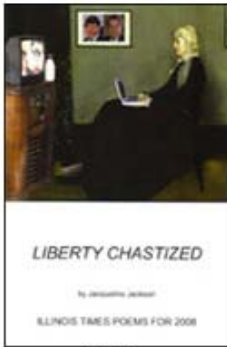
2005



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.