

Liberty Goes Granite



*A collection of poetry by
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Illinois Times - 2013*



From the author

The 2012 issue gave Liberty's history and explained the cow connection in so many of the poems.

This year I've continued my life work (see back pages). Volumes 3 and 4 will be out in April; these are the last. I plan to send out notices.

Dedication

This year's dedication is to the members of the Thursday night writing group, whose presence, work, and critiques gladden my heart.

It continues to be dedicated to those listed in 2012, who, like Dr. Dolittle's pushmi-pullyu, are pushing and pulling to be sure Round Barn reaches completion: Reg Gibbons, Roland Klose, Jeremy Schmidt, Mitch Hopper, Rodd Whelpley, Annette Hunsaker, Tom McBride. Brian Jackson, and more!

This work has truly been a team effort.

Again, thanks to Mitch Hopper for producing this booklet, and another inspired cover.

(He is trying to figure how to use a Picasso and still make the author recognizable.)

January 3, 2013

skylark poem #1

I am thankful to those who made us
memorize as kids useful stuff yes like
multiplication tables but I'm thinking
of poetry miss lala dixon my eighth grade
english teacher she of the shapeless dress
drooping boobs she talked a kind of baby
talk her name was pronounced layla but
we called her la-la behind her back she
made us memorize parts of shelley's to
a skylark: "hail to thee blithe spirit// bird
thou never wert// who from heav'n or near it
pourest thy full heart// in profuse strains of
unpremeditated art" what magic words for
young minds six syllables to unpremeditated
and the way your lips teeth tongue wrap
around blithe (try it) and "we look before
and after// and pine for what is not// our
sincerest laughter// with some pain is fraught
our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest
thought" how generous of her to give us those
treasures in our heads to last for life I loved
larks before I ever heard one now my wish is
to lie next spring on whitehorse hill down the
ridgeway from wayland smithy's longbarrow
listen to the lambs all a-crying look up into
the fathomless blue and be drunk with skylarks

January 10, 2013

post-holiday poem

NPR's this American life had stories about the lengths some parents have gone to make the good saint real I was too young to recall when he brought our pony but there are photos of my sisters and me astride the gentle beast and a rather thin Santa holding the bridle my folks were realists: of course Santa didn't come down the chimney ours was too narrow he came in the door and in the morning the cookies and milk were always gone I won't repeat the worst NPR story but my parents never threw horse apples on the roof to show reindeer had been there—well, they needn't would they as he did come through the door horse apples in the yard wouldn't have been mistaken for reindeer turds—where were the hoof marks anyway we knew horse apples—used them frozen for snowballs when snow was scarce

January 17, 2013

**water turned off:
sorry for the inconvenience**

oh how did they pee
in the PAC
when the pressure became burning
at our local place of learning
did some take a paper cup
and try not to fill it up
for it was sure to spill
in a case of overflow
did some try a filing drawer
which would hold a little more
did some sneak out to the bushes
and bare their frosty tushes
hoping no one would report 'em
or worse make fun and sport 'em
did the male profs write in snow
as they did oh long ago
did the women stifling cries
press tight their throbbing thighs
p'raps there was a jamboree
when no one got to pee
in the lavator-or-y
at our university
when the water was turned off
in the PAC

January 24, 2013

found remark poem # 8
from Gillian at 17

“I have to write a
Canterbury tale
tonight. How long
did it take Chaucer?”

January 31, 2013

globalwarming poem #5

okay folks we can quit worrying
this human-driven climate change
catastrophic weather is going to
be over in about 500 years I heard it
from a major scientific mouth saw
graphs photos that's because we'll have
used up all the forests oil coal by then
plus the CO2 will have sunk to the
ocean floor where it's being absorbed
into the dead coral then things will
ease back to our normal climate
change cycle what will happen to us
through those years as our numbers
grow exponentially is an easy guess
arable land will dwindle waters rise
droughts increase fracking make our
wells undrinkable tumble our peaks
into our streams foster revolutions
against the gated communities but
hey we can grow parsnips near the
south pole and maybe if we reproduce
even faster we can cut it to 400 years
or adopt by global choice or more likely
non-choice zero population growth

February 7, 2013

strange sight poem #1

our river flooded and froze
when the water receded the
kids and I winter-hiked in
the sangamon bottomland
each tree, thick and ancient
to sapling slim, was circled
about waist high with a white
ice tutu a vast corps de ballet
sleeping beauties stilled by a
cold enchantress or perhaps
waiting for the cue of swan lake

February 14, 2013

zen moment poem #1

by guest poet Delinda Chapman

the next day, in the
stillness of the moment,
noting the candle's
rhythmic flicker I knew
the walls were singing,
reverberating from the joyous
sounds of forty choir-camp voices
as they raised the roof of my home

February 21, 2013

inconsequential poem # 15

demi said hang on to
that thought while
I empty the hot water
bottle but I don't know
whether wondering
when and where
baloney originated
is a thought worth
hanging onto

February 28, 2013

downtonabbeypoem #1

well it was a crummy trick
not up to masterpiece standards
I understand the brits got hit
with both childbirth deaths on
successive christmas days we
were clobbered in february
matthew it seems and maybe
sybil too wanted out though it
must have been making both
a mint folks worldwide hanging
on this glorified soap opera it
reinforces why I prefer print
two-thirds through mr rochester
doesn't decide to walk off the set
nor darcy heaven forbid head for
greener pastures; yet we do have a
hazard with books we'll never solve
the mystery of dickens' edwin drood

March 7, 2013

politico poem #11

the institution where once I so
proudly taught has introduced a minor
called liberty studies partly funded by
the koch brothers urbana turned it down
but not us are we so desperate for dough?
in the article a senior student is quoted:
“Nobody will be forced to earn a minor in
liberty studies, concerns about academic
freedom and critical thinking in the
program might be overblown, given
that most UIS students take a pragmatic
approach to their studies and rarely
speak up in class. They know if they
don’t say anything, the course is over
faster and they can leave sooner.” Ah
me—in 1970 we began with such ideals
my students and those of other profs
couldn’t wait to get to class they stayed
beyond the allotted time we couldn’t
shut them up how far we have fallen
are the koch brothers the new salvation
for learning? our home state sure ain’t

March 14, 2013

babblepoem #1

you word lovers out there have you
discovered babble on the net it's free
for a bit then continues so without
stats to help but life membership is
peanuts it's a combo boggle-scrabble
new grid daily it's challenging but
here's what's most fascinating the
babblechat bar where clever clues
are given babblers greet old friends
welcome new, pepper gridbabble with
states of health one has a depressed
grandson not finishing his dissertation
so talk ensues on deadlines as well as
mental health today someone is going
to synagogue this eve, who's jewish in
babbleland for advice on garb? she
doesn't want to offend turns out many
are qualified on this topic I learned
orthodox reformed the pros and cons
of pants vs skirts r. c.'s chimed in on
catholic events a muslim contributed
clothing mores you get to know these
wordhounds from canada u.s. u.k. aus
the grid flips at midnight central time
all have monikers my daughter no. 3
is rastapopoulos from tintin uusue
must be unitarian she hasn't told us
that uu's wear jeans though as head of
a department somewhere she had wise
words on late dissertations yesterday

March 21, 2013

obitpoem #1

a recent obit in the state j-r is
too good to pass up who wrote it
nephew maybe niece the account
is of an ordinary life if such be
birth education job etc etc then
“she became adventuresome in
her old age” at 80 skydived 81
got a butterfly tattoo other daring
exploits follow punctuated with
more butterflies then at 84 she
ziplined and shortly after “flew
off to join her lord” way to go
maggie! may we all be so gutsy grab
life by the oysters in our waning years

March 28, 2013

funnybiz poem #6

how about a joke in this space
my daughter #2 reports she
got a t-shirt for her son it had a
group of marshmallows sitting
around a campfire with terror
on their faces the marshmallow
storyteller was saying “and
then they took the chocolate
and then graham crackers . . .”

April 4, 2013

poetrypoem #11

my brother once got booted from
a ninth grade english class for his
reply to a reprimand “oh butcher
spare yon tender calf” yes a poetic
quote but archy and mehitabel
must not have been included in
that teacher’s accepted canon
wat the hell wat the hell

April 11, 2013

north fifth street poem #17

seventy score and seven runners passed
my door this morning many in blue t-shirts
the lincoln half-marathon: I've lived in
lincolnland over 40 years now; one gets
inoculated though I used to take classes to
his home on mary's birthday give cake to
passersby I've been slow to read team of rivals
finished it last night fought tears throughout
his later years the repeated deaths fought the
depths of my child's death though I have not
walked through battlegrounds strewn with
bodies sprawled thick as stones on a scree
touching the dying no wonder his profound
sadness punctuated by the humor he needed
to endure no wonder mary was as she was I
see her now living across this street a recluse
dishonored estranged from the remaining
child who committed her I see lincoln in my own
foyer 1860 exchanging banter with the workmen
he who shook 1700 hands in a white house hour
it's a true legend this house visit it fits and now
I watch 1700 runners, thinking how different
our country would be had he lived had his
children lived he of the 70 times seven
griefs did not spurn individual ones how I too
would be different were my child here loving
this spectacle: my house, our street, these running
feet we all are hallowed by his presence among us

April 18, 2013

ZenMomentPoem #2

by guest-poet Delinda Chapman

The visiting choir director
When speaking with the children
Asked their favorite song
As they shrugged their shoulders
She asked then their favorite animal
“Cows” said a boy,
“The cows say ‘Moo Moo.’”
Within minutes the director
Had the whole congregation
Singing in a rousing round,
“The Cows say Moo Moo”
“The Cows say Moo Moo”
“The Cows say Moo Moo.”

April 25, 2013

bostonmarathon poem #2

two unbidden pictures keep filling
my head neither from tv screens one
that kid younger than my grandsons
lying in his pooled blood in the beached
boat waiting for the inevitable he'd
surely gathered news on his flight the
dead 8-year-old others with shattered
bodies severed limbs did he feel any
remorse was it all rage defiance his
mother screamed I heard that on the
air the other is of a 7-year-old
her brother gone her own leg gone had
she been taking ballet like my young
grandkids she surely played tag rode
her bike I hope she'll meet our spunky
illinois congresswoman both legs lost
in warfare that shouldn't have been
I hope her mother's head heals: her
crippled heart is needed and the dad's
too I heard a caller-in saying yes let us
praise police and boston bravery but
remember remember butchered syrians

May 2, 2013

earthday poem #3

went to earthday festivities at
union park: encouraging displays
greeny ideas demonstrations
so cold and rainy not many came
the decorated refrigerators caught
my heart they should be a traveling
exhibit green trolls popping out to
sing green limericks thumb noses
at gas guzzlers and get this if you
want a green whole-body burial
you can now be shrouded in jute
and lowered in a wicker casket
you'll join the earth quite quickly

May 9, 2013

earthday-ecopoem # 11

“A major study commissioned by the British government concludes in its yesterday report that rapid and substantial spending to combat global warming is needed to avert a catastrophic reduction in worldwide productivity on the scale of the Great Depression that could devastate food sources, cause widespread deaths and turn hundreds of millions of people into refugees.”

-- Los Angeles Times, Oct. 31, 2006

our span will not outlast the dinosaurs'
our great-great-grands will not enjoy s'mores
those long-lived beasts were done in by a stone
we can manage thank you all alone

May 16, 2013

ecopoem #17

everything living
on this thin skin
that supports life
has three missions
eat to stay alive
for the same reason
avoid being eaten
and breed in order to
perpetuate your line
so it can go on eating
and avoid being eaten
all the rest is frosting
like the bruch first
violin concerto

May 23, 2013

operapoem #2

when you hear over WILL that
the opera will start an hour early
you automatically think wagner
and sure enough here come the
leit motifs of sigmund or seigfried
or whoever (our cows never milked
well during ride of the valkyries)
my intro to real stage wagner: a
high school classmate enamored
of opera coached my sibs and me
on the ring cycle for months then
we all took the train to Chicago
for a live performance singers and
orchestra oh it was thrilling all right
and we were well prepared but it
got to be eleven our train's departure
and brunhilde had not yet lain asleep
in her circle of magic fire no way were
we leaving we stayed through the
final bows then took the milk train
home to wisconsin jammed in with
early editions of the tribune no cells
in those days our folks didn't much
worry just eager for postmortems

May 30, 2013

skylark poem #2

her ashes—my brit child's—were in a
baggie only about a palmful I left a pinch
at the dorset farm she loved another on
white horse hill near the town of her birth
sun wind skylarks brilliant kites and folk
from all over giving the prehistoric chalk
carving its yearly cleaning a third pinch
in cornwall's lost garden of heligan back in
the trees a giant troll head half out of the
ground its nose a long root its lush hair
waving greenly I left some ash in the corner
of a merry eye (a mosaic of white and blue
pottery shards) call it a tear of joy the last
bits I scattered the length of the green maid
asleep in the woods from her cradled green
head to her toes most on her toes the toes of
the green child I kissed one by each one my
final lonely act before leaving her lost form in
the e.r. sleep gently beloved demi in woods
you loved now part of a form that enchanted
you my lost child in the lost garden of heligan

June 6, 2013

remember poem #8

in sunday school
one sunday
I was five or six
I wanted to
go back to
the sand table
but they said
you're too big
a girl for that

June 13, 2013

brewpoem #1

here are the brews we drank in england
piddle from the nearby village of piddle
there's a cluster of piddles including
piddle in the hole we drank hobgoblin
dark ale from the wychwood brewery in
witney. heligan honey, roosters elderflower
recommended in the "spit or swallow beer
review", crop circle from hop back brewery
about those circles our farmer host says
I could make one myself the only puzzle
is how the fellows keep from being caught
it takes a little time maybe the field's owner
is in on the sport this did not diminish our
pleasure in the ale we also quaffed magpie
magic though real magpies on the lawn
were being lured into live traps (another
magpie needed for bait) and transported
they kill valued fledglings like swallows also
what is happening to cuckoos notorious for
usurping nests for their own eggs and leaving
the hapless wee owners to bring up a ravenous
foster child we heard nary a cuckoo during
our stay michael says he hasn't heard one in
three years I'm off the subject aren't I well
to finish how about a dumb joke from my
childhood when the lord passed out ears I
thought he said beers so I says gimme big ones

June 20, 2013

estate sale poem #1

one should not feel regret
for the things not bought
at an estate sale after all I got
the presents for my grandkids'
joint birthday bash due that night
a fleet of bright little motorcycles
well-made 50c each and an artsy
dragon music box that played a
rather unmagical puff for only
three bucks but what I really
wanted was the worn pull-toy
from the 30s a cheerful wooden
donald duck hammering on a
xylophone and honey bunch her
first visit to the farm prob 1910
but donald was 150 bucks and
honey bunch a measly \$4.00
I at least should have bought
honey bunch but I thought I
had one of that series in my
huge collection of ancient books
for kids and who's going to want
that collection anyway what will
anyone want with a set of worn
st nicholases and honey bunches

June 27, 2013

paleo poem #5

friends who spit in a bottle
have found their genes are
between two and three percent
neanderthal let us sing praise
to our heavy-browed ancestors
let us take comfort that even if
our wise species did them in
(and how shall we ever know)
they still exist in almost all
of us no doubt contributing
valuable bits to our DNA

July 4, 2013

word poem #6

this babble game on the net
sorta like boggle isn't a complete
waste of time yesterday I learned
"isohyets" are lines on a map that
connect areas of equal rainfall I
see that useful in conversation I
already knew "oriel" a window but
it pleasantly recalled st chapelle
another "feces" familiar enough
yet a reminder of our common
humanity broader though for all
creatures defecate even bacteria
the weight of an old bed pillow is
said to be half dust mite excretia
sobering thought maybe no one
will want to talk to me today don't
know I even want my own company
let's see what the current words net
ah here are agora aristate gnat and
gnaws hock hogan and this oddity
ringtaws accepted in the grid but
the babble dictionary gives no hint
nor taws alone does no one play
tops or marbles anymore we did

July 11, 2013

independence day poem #1

driving home after a july 4 picnic
the sky blossoming with fireworks
explosion after explosion and
on the radio the 1812 overture
with real cannons at the finale real
church bells a smash performance
by the minnesota symphony boy
did that piece curdle our cows' milk
when they heard it in the barn and on
July 4 every dog covered under a bed

July 18, 2013

enos park poem #1

hey guys hows about some good news
here's enos park on the humble near
north side we have a sculpture garden
across from susie q's a pink and blue
tuxhorn behemoth swung our first
large statue into place and there's the
west side christian church with its
scores of volunteers come to give
mcclernand school a face-lift surely
a spirit-lift too (it sure lifts mine all the
trees trimmed in my yard because I'm
surrounded by the school) and what
about third presby on n. seventh it's
serving a meal free every thursday to
the community you don't need to be
poor or homeless everyone is welcome
the pastor brent says it's because folk
don't walk to church any more they
seldom know their neighbors so this is
to meet them presby also has a well
stocked staffed attended kids' library
while kumler methodist is fostering
garden plots in our vacant lots we also
have a bike doctor who'll help you fix
your bike there is more yet going on
rehabbing houses habitat involved a
house rent free for our very own cop
a rehab store with doorknobs light
fixtures staircases saved from the
wrecking ball don't forget the art ass'n
we need our bard, lola, to write another
book include marilyn steve bud andy
michelle bernie carol amaya sheila jack
can't list all names of this group effort

July 25, 2013

you can't make this up poem #1

in texas at the statehouse
the security guards took away
from the women entering all
feminine materials what
concealed carry is in a tampon?

August 1, 2013

greenpoem #4

a friend tells of her sister who
when very small recited a
catechism with the line “god is
the supreme being who rules
heaven and earth”--for years she
thought “supreme being” was a
“string bean” entrusted with this
formidable job it seems to me
we could do worse a string bean
is upright reliable you can count
on a string bean it is humble
unpretentious respected and
right now green is a popular
even powerful symbol we
need all the green we can get

August 8, 2013

vermont poem # 17

evening still light, ashley, six, stands on
the dock watching me swim she is in her
shorty yellow summer pajamas a green
frog splashed across her belly she states
to me gravely, "I am exploring the world."

August 15, 2013

foodie poem #5

a friend lately led a class to china
saw many wonders took tons of pix
one sight was not so palatable at the
zoo you could purchase a live chicken
or even an entire cow and feed it to
the lions you could buy just a haunch
of meat if you were squeamish or
watch a movie of a tiger tearing into
a bellowing bovine here's a way to
save public money we should suggest
to our henson robinson zoo how about
for-sale bunnies to feed their big cats

August 22, 2013

north fifth street poem #22

I appreciate west side christian in its
marvelous makeover of mcclernand
it included me luckily surrounded by
that school they trimmed my trees leveled
a long dirt barrow carted off my behemoth
brush pile it took a fork lift cleared the
adjacent jungle where a volunteer swung
on the vines whee and my neighbor of
27 years said he'd never known a gate
was there my yard now looks like a kid
who's had his back-to-school haircut all
neat all scalped new shoes on his sole-tough
feet I really, really do appreciate being part
of mcclernand's transformation the church's
grand generosity but—but -- I have watched
a small rabbit wander the grass what has
happened to its homeland and a possum too

August 29, 2013

vermont poem #24

forty-five—maybe more—biggies
gliding swiftly on the water before
our shore black gold identical stately
as swans a long trail of geese a bit
bunched here and there I'd heard
them recently across the lake gabbling
fighting maybe just conversing now
profiles that look unwaveringly ahead
a silent egyptian mural going where?
I later found their pit stop a grassy
knoll on shore coils of snake-black
poop so huge you couldn't pick your
way a few feathers too I never saw that
flock again oh maybe three skimming the
surface but never that long string of
regal waterfowl making the lake their own

September 5, 2013

marylebone waxworks poem #1

mom wanted to visit madame tussauds
famous wax museum when they were in
london dad wasn't eager he'd binged his
knee was on a cane but he hobbled along
past lifelike ax murderers kings beheaded
queens winston churchill philanthropists
poets till tired he stood tall and still beside
a pillar hands in repose on his cane seemed
a waxwork himself a tourist came by looked
him over glanced down at his feet to learn
from the placard who he was there wasn't
one of course she looked back up at him
puzzled and he winked her scream could
be heard farther than buckingham palace

September 12, 2013

hearing poem #1

I have a friend with tinnitus he
has sound in his head all the time
sometimes it's a buzzing he says
sometimes a hissing but it's constant
always there sometimes he tells me
I stand out on the back step in the
early morning feel the breeze see
the leaves moving and I wonder
what does silence sound like

September 19, 2013

cicada poem # 17

my backyard is shrill with sex
no it ain't no coffee kletch
all the guys that fill the trees
are shrieking git me with their knees
locust ladies loose their thongs
choose the studs with shrillest songs
such a skirl of sound is ringing
lustful lassies come awinging
join in great gigantic ceilis
with the wankiest of the wailies
does every adam grasp his annie
every frankie frig his fannie
every stewie smooch his jill
till finally the trees fall still
surely some unlucky boys
who have not made successful noise
must practice their seductive screeches
if they hope soon to ease their breeches

September 26, 2013

foodie poem #4

those of us who live alone talk out loud
to ourselves, come up with varied games
one of mine when the larder is bare yet
going to the store seems onerous is to
play freezer surprise select something
long frozen unmarked undated of course
defrost and see what leftover is for supper
yesterday's did not look promising a sort
of grey sludge rather like pudding but
lumpily suspicious it proved to be thick
pea soup tasty with hunks of ham not all
choices are as lucky my criterion in this
game is would a soccer player in the andes
eat it my depression-child upbringing
makes the answer invariably yes

October 3, 2013

suicide poem number what

well it's three years today since
she chose to leave us I shouldn't
feel any different today since I
think about her every day but
somehow your bones remind you
more strongly. I guess I have some
things to be thankful for that she
didn't take a messy way out with
shotgun or fatal jump; overdose and
drowning is neat but if Gary and
Larry hadn't sought her found her
still swimming it would have been
a mess to find her in the lake the
shore full of gawking folk while
divers dove and dove so I can be
grateful to her to Gary and Larry who
surrounded her with love at the last
grateful to friends family all who
loved her and still miss her keenly
she was desperately ill of course or
she wouldn't have put any of us
through it I hope there is no afterlife
or if there is she didn't take her
demon with her well as the final line
of Lycidas says tomorrow to fresh woods
and pastures new the only way to keep on

October 10, 2013

bowdlerpoem #1

a pure minded pedant of yore
(starts like a limerick don't you
think? never fear) well this guy
purged ancient literature of any
offense he eliminated all such
tainted material but he was too
much a scholar to get rid of it
totally so he put it in appendices
that meant all us latin and greek
students didn't have to search for
the naughty bits they were nicely
collected for us in one spot which
brings me to book banning and
other school ills when we lived in
rockford they were trying to oust
the superintendent a good one
I wrote a ballad the local paper
didn't have guts to print though
I heard it was posted in their
newsroom one verse went thusly:
they're reading stuff in high school
that they hadn't oughter to be
I haven't seen the stories but
they're pure pornography
and if you think that dirty words
are really something new then
look at old will shakespeare
and that smutty bible too --
if you fancy more rhymes ask
for the rest of the ballad with
chorus also the name of that busy
scholar has entered the language as
bowdlerize something *IT* doesn't do

October 17, 2013

farmer letter poem #16

thursday we had the university
down harvesting their corn yield
test plots then yesterday we made
sixty-five cows happy by telling
them the extent of their pregnancy

October 24, 2013

prayerpoem #4

today's prayers were in luganda
mukama tukwebaza, olwobulamu
bwafte era tukwebazza olwabantu
bonna abali wano embanjawulo
abakazi abassajja aberu nabadugavu
lord we thank you for our lives and
we thank you for everyone who is
here whether man woman black white
I heard about a school in uganda
and two orphanages one filled with
children who have lost both parents
to the aids virus the other filled with
children who themselves have
received the hiv-aids virus my
nighttime dreams are so often of
children lost or of my trying to
protect children so they will not
be lost how could I not contribute

October 31, 2013

weedseed poem #1

going through old farm stuff I find
a folder called wis crop improvement
ass'n it holds a 1965 program for an
area meet that includes a workshop on
weed seed identification and ends BE
SURE TO BRING YOUR GLASSES
SINCE WE WILL BE LOOKING AT
WEED SEEDS there follows a list and
descriptions starting with quackgrass:
“about 38 inch long, narrow, hollowed
on one side with rachilla at base—green
to straw colored.” do you want to hear
descriptions of the rest? yellow foxtail,
green foxtail, wild buckwheat (black
bindweed), ladythumb (smartweed),
red sorrel, curled dock, lambsquarter,
white cockle, yellow rocket, ragweed,
hoary alyssum, wild mustard, wild
radish, leafy spurge, dodder, buckhorn,
oxeye daisy, canada thistle, sowthistle,
velvet weed—what? no? I didn't think so

November 7, 2013

north fifth street poem #17

every weekday morning I hear the
pledge of allegiance it's broadcast
all over the neighborhood no I don't
stop what I'm doing composting
the garbage or wiping up a spill to
stand with my hand on my heart
facing the flag the only flag here is
a small one atop a paper umbrella
over the stove unless in july when
one is always on the calendar but
there's no daily pledge in july I do
though in my heart join in wishing
a happy birthday to every child
announced and hoping she or he
will receive a natal day present not
flimsy or plastic that will break by
bedtime or has too many pieces
prone to loss and that that special
kid is cherished today and every day

November 14, 2013

irony poem I guess # 2

with the world deteriorating
in almost any area you think of
consider farmland gobbled up
oceans dying ditto the humanities
I hesitate to mention that as a kid
I found the crackerjack prize was
worth ripping open the box to
get at now they're just paper bits
maybe a tattoo transfer mine has
printing on the back says that some
vintage prizes are collectors items
worth thousands of dollars well duh

November 21, 2013

from a great-grandkid poem #1

one hears family stories that are
revealed quite late sometimes only
as conjecture for instance my friend's
paternal great-grandmother when the
black clad men pulled up in their black
hearse-like cars she shoved all her
children under the dining room table
its cloth to the floor the men went
down to her basement came up left
she lifted her long skirt rolled a wad
of money into her stocking it was
prohibition one of the tablecloth kids
told her granddaughter who told it
to me what's your guess?

November 28, 2013

thanksgiving poem #7

one of the happiest events at
our university has occurred
yearly since '77 the international
festival last week was no exception
colorful native dress and design
tasty native foods familiar and
unfamiliar tongues the variety of
games music and oh the dancing
cheered on by the appreciative
crowd irish scottish with bagpipes
little ones still learning the steps
but included with the bigger folk
honduran indian many varieties of
african each different poetry spoken
with drum beats hip-hop too made
you want to jump up swing into a
grand celestial do-si-do I laughed at
well fleshed gauzily draped bellies
women daring flaunting drama with
that exposed anatomy it gave me
heart for my own protuberances
any part of us can dance at any age
my grandson will star in two scenes
of nutcracker granddaughter in one
both knowing the joy of movement
I felt tears though remembering my
mother nimbly skipping over and
around crossed swords and then my
daughter wildly improvising to
simon's fiddle until the two swayed
and slowed to a hushed diminuendo
how she would have loved tonight
how both would have loved tonight
loved living in their lithesome bodies

December 5, 2013

storypoem #16

nellie needham a spinster schoolteacher
my grampa's second cousin loaned him
money in 1911 to build the round barn it
was paid back very slowly over the years
during the depression she lowered the
interest to match the federal land bank
wouldn't take no for an answer my dad
inherited the debt told nellie he'd pay
interest and some principle every due
date but only if she first wrote to him
she did but never mentioned money a
lively correspondence ensued over many
years I met her once in watertown I was
15 she was over 90 tiny wrinkled
spry bright eyed she said the chariot had
missed her door if it didn't swing low
soon she and her friends were going to
charter a bus she also said every day
she raised her kitchen shade if it stayed
down her neighbors would know she was
in trouble when my father paid the last
installment she returned it wrote that of
all the family she'd lent money to he and
his father were the only ones who ever
paid it back I have the file of mutual
letters it is sweet reading she says old
age has been kind to her with health
home friends what more can she need?
nothing, but the world needs more nellies

December 12, 2013

longlastinglove poem

it's been over forty years since jim
a former herdsman worked in this
barn he stands here looking around
feeling its emptiness reminisces
my favorite cow was a big rugged
gentle cow of good production, I-9,
she always stood just at the entrance
to the lower barn beside her stood
my other favorite J-2 her sister
another favorite, K-5 stood about
one fourth of the way around to the
right then there was H-9 who was
being milked when she rode on the
float in the fourth of july parade

December 19, 2013

My Gift

*This poem was written by my mother,
Vera Wardner Dougan, to my father,
for their first Christmas together, 1924.
I'm repeating it here, for it is so
simple, appropriate, and tender. JDJ*

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 26, 2013

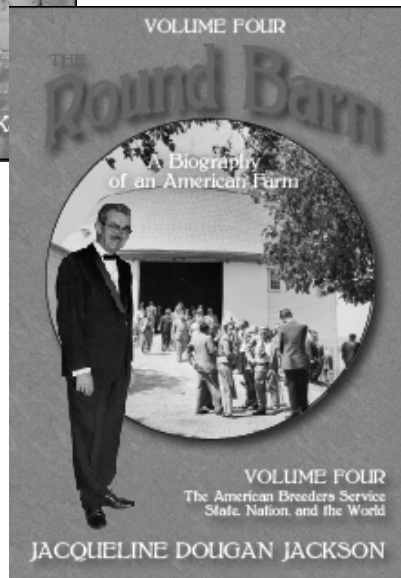
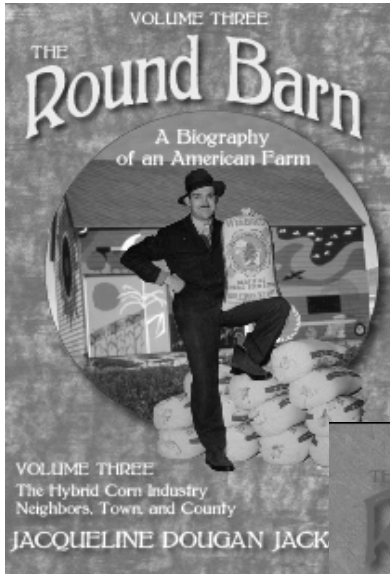
oomphalos poem #1

when my dad was sixty-seven he
was in the hospital a couple months
he was a terrible patient he wouldn't
eat the food wouldn't drink the water
"it tastes better in my horse trough!"
and the coffee was strained through
an irishman's sock mother had to
bring him oyster stew in a thermos
until he broke out all over in hives he
recovered after a few gut operations
the incisions had moved his navel far
from home way over to the side this
made him undisputed victor in the
"trick" division of our belly button
contests the youngest grandchild
elspeth always aced "cutest"

The final volumes of The Round Barn, A Biography of an American Farm, will be published April, 1 2014.

Volume 3: "Ron's Place, The Hybrid Corn Business, Neighbors, Town, and County."

Volume 4: "American Breeders Service, State, Nation, and World."



“The rhythms of farm life pulse through the dozens of vignettes that make up the story of the round barn: the sheer, sometimes dangerous, work that keeps a farm going. We see how advances in science, the evolution of popular tastes, the vicissitudes of the economy, the world changing events like the Depression and two world wars affect the farm for good and ill. But Jackie's transcendent gift is her empathy for the family she loves and the people she meets growing up. The spirit of her grandfather, Daddy Dougan, pervades the book. His story exemplifies the intelligence, pluck, grace, and steadfastness that she sees in so many of the people around her.” --Joe Kolina, TriQuarterly

“What an unrepeatabe phenomenon The Round Barn is. No one else in the past or future could ever have matched or will ever match Jackson's knowledge and experiance and clarity of thought, but also her writing. The Round Barn is a unique work by a unique writer and one of the treasures of American life and letters.” --Reginald Gibbons, Director, Center for the Writing Arts, Northwestern University

“It is fortunate that such a skillful author has written this account of an unusual farm. We should hope that other biographies of farms, both unique and typical, achieve such excellence.” --Agricultural History, Arnold Alanen, University of Wisconsin-Madison

"Jackie Jackson throws open the Round Barn doors 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. In our world of '140' characters' Jackie adds depth and texture with the remembered word, the treasured memory, and the wonderful characters she met on her life's journey." --Dick Durbin, U.S. Senator-Illinois

For more information, including purchasing, please visit our website:

www.roundbarnstories.com

The following is a sample story from the upcoming Volumes Three and Four of –

The Round Barn, a Biography of an American Farm.

Junior Schiz

It's 1955. Craig is in medical school at the University of Wisconsin. It's the evening of the variety show, the Junior Schiz, pronounced, of course, "skits." Craig is in it; his skit is a takeoff on the dean, a famous obstetrician. For his act he's paid a previous visit to his old friend Amos Grundahl, the artificial inseminator at the Rock County Breeders Co-op. He's borrowed a vital item of equipment for inseminating a cow.

The show is held at the student union on Lake Mendota, and such has been the popularity of the Jr. Schiz down through the years, that it's become a major university event, much anticipated. The acts can't be by just anybody who has an idea. There are auditions. Craig's audition was a shoo-in.

Tonight, the large auditorium is packed. For his skit, Craig has arranged for a hospital bed to be on stage. In the bed, under a sheet, is what appears to be a supine figure. Craig comes out, mimicking Dr. Campbell's distinctive walk and thrust of head. Everyone in the medical school recognizes who he's meant to be. They clap and cheer. He bends and peeps under the sheet, shakes his head, peers at the audience, then turns to check his instruments. He holds up an ice tong and nods sagely. The audience groans. He hefts a bundle of sticks marked TNT; the audience groans louder.

Then with thumb and forefinger he lifts the sterile packet that contains gloves and removes one. He inserts his hand in the glove and fits the fingers elaborately, holding his hand up to the assemblage after each finger is accomplished. Then, with studied nonchalance, he starts pulling up the cuff. There's an audible gasp when it reaches his elbow. As it reaches his shoulder the audience is laughing. Craig takes the strap, ducks his head through it and hooks it over his other shoulder, dramatically stretching out his sheathed arm. The audience is convulsed.

The dean, however, gets up and stalks out.

