



*does*  
***LIBERTY***  
*play an ace?*

*A collection of poetry by  
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## **dedication**

These little booklets are a footnote  
to those who have nurtured me  
as a writer and much much more:

My Family

Chad and Eva Walsh

Roy Cowden

Roland Klose

Jeremy Schmidt

J. Mitch Hopper

and

Reginald Gibbons



*January 7, 2021*

**year end/year beginning poem**

it doesn't feel like 2021 yet I'm hoping  
it will by january 20 who knows what all  
will happen even is happening in this  
crazy lame duck "2020" period so this is still  
an old year poem on our difficult year –  
our isolation, lack of holidays, illness,  
separation from those we love, deaths,  
increasing fragility of our political  
system, the list goes on and on how  
can anyone write a cheery report for  
2020? but I realize there have been  
some pluses – unexpected phone calls  
from friends long neglected, time to read  
unlikely books, some visits at social distance,  
long moments to think, ponder, an amtrak ride  
to visit isolated kids – I am not among those who  
have lost house, job, money, I am even in a  
position to help a bit locally, politically,  
and now we're on the brink of vaccines  
we can hope to resume life at a new normal  
perhaps this next year – also I've had a  
surprising benefit from 2021: a renewed  
deeper acquaintance with the starry sky

*January 14, 2021*

**Non-new year poem again:**

*this time on value of books*

the times are still chaotic so how about  
a bit of dubious humor till the pendulum  
swings? my librarian friend heard this  
from a coworker at west branch so  
it's surely true – a woman came in to  
pay for a lost book "why don't you wait  
two weeks? it'll probably show up" "no, it  
is a lost book" "but with a little more time" –  
"no it is definitely a lost book" "but – but" –  
"honey, you're not getting that book back! My  
husband was reading that book when he died and  
I put it in the coffin with him" the librarian  
wordlessly accepted the cost of the volume

*January 21, 2021*

**calmness poem #1**

perhaps the chaos has calmed but in  
any case here is something calming: on  
your device dial itzhak perlman playing  
the mendelssohn concerto see him  
thread his way through the orchestra  
on his crutches (polio when he was four)  
watch him rest the crutches beside his  
chair, lift his violin begin to play – you see  
closeups of his face it is so filled with  
peace pleasure enjoyment rapture  
even in the fast and tricky parts that  
his spirit is catching seeps through your  
soul gives you peace pleasure joy so  
you too may feel contentment, calm  
no matter what your music tastes may be

*January 28, 2021*

**dies irae terrae # 13: new year**

inauguration over new era begun much to  
repair much to get on with: vaccs must  
come first heal people then people heal  
planet at least stanch the hemorrhaging  
it's not like we haven't been warned – 18th  
century malthus my dad reported in a 1954  
speech told us our world was finite could  
support only a number we were already close  
to exceed; dad himself was helping that climb  
with his and others' work improving corn  
improving cows he said a day of reckoning  
would surely come: if we didn't act soon our  
world would do it for us – well it's happening  
now and has been – my father didn't know of land  
drift temps rising water rising but we've  
been aware a long time now: there's maybe ten  
years to halt, reverse: read kolbert mckinnon others  
we must take action for an earth worth leaving to  
grandkids, gr-gr-grands – perhaps this covid living  
is preparing us to do much more with much much less



*February 4, 2021*

**Aeneid poem # 1: a quilter's afterlife**

*By Elizabeth Crowley (adapted to this space with added words)*

Virgil you had it wrong or at least  
incomplete with your rowdy wrestling  
warriors pitching javelins, spears –  
eternal olympic games in the fields  
elysian: for in that same sweet  
greensward dwell those who sew  
quilt weave humming singing as they  
throw needles, shuttles on frames  
looms blending fabric and thread to  
create forever beauty, warmth, peace

*February 11, 2021*

**congress poem #2**

well here's an idea now we have  
legislators brazenly carrying arms  
into congress why not post a soldier  
beside that member all the time she/he  
is in the capitol hmm here's a book plot:  
the soldier gets radicalized for instance  
or to be impartially fair every senate  
house member has to have a personal  
guard – or members moving their offices  
to secret spots around town or out of it  
even – or maybe the guards need a guard  
you get the idea, take it from here –  
though what's going to actually happen?

*February 18, 2021*

**strong advice poem #1**

these lines come from a young mom  
daughter of a former student – we've  
kept up over the years here she hits  
a bullseye with me I bet many of us:  
"When my elderly aunt died the task  
of cleaning up her affairs fell to me  
her closest relative. She was a painter  
writer hoarder – it was a nightmare!  
when it came to paper-sorting there was  
no rhyme nor reason no filing system her  
precious poems medical statements bills  
paid and unpaid mixed together in a soup  
a little mildew and a few mouse droppings  
for added flavor. So anything we can do to  
'tidy up' while we are still in this world  
is a gift to those we love – they don't need  
the headache! Start now, no matter what our  
chronological age – for one never knows!"

*February 25, 2021*

**community concert poem #2**

what makes an item have value? my  
sister remembers this as madison  
I recall it as at a beloit community  
concert but no matter – the action is  
the same: a famous violinist was playing  
was it heifetz? menuhin? szigeti? too long  
ago for perlman, joshua bell – anyway  
the soloist broke a string I have never  
seen anyone change a string as rapidly  
as he did – then tuned, picked up right  
where he'd left off – a second after the  
final applause that closed the concert  
my sister scrambled to the stage fell to  
her knees retrieved the broken string  
the virtuoso had dropped (I think an A)  
she kept it in a velvet box in her bedroom  
(she was of course an aspiring fiddler) – I  
used to sneak reverent peeks at that string  
she doesn't know where it is now but  
surely it was never never thrown away

*March 4, 2021*

**strong advice poem #51**

*(Letter from my father to my sister and brother-in-law)*

Pat and Lew, I don't think I'll bring  
clothing along – just Reeboks and jeans  
This should be called the “year of the Reebok”  
Last Sunday the youngsters in the church  
took over the service: 32.333% were in Reeboks  
89.44% of the congregation had white hair  
41.3% had hearing aids. Don't question my figures-  
they are accurate. TV is always giving the  
percentage of doctors recommending a certain  
tooth brush which will eliminate plaque!  
The dog and I still have all our teeth.

*March 11, 2021*

**power of literature poem # 7**

speaking of discarding things of value  
who determines value? my brother and I  
had our tonsils out it was routine  
practice for kids then: the surgeon  
gave them to us in a small glass bottle  
about the size of a peanut butter jar you  
could see the crinkly castoffs floating in  
[I presume] formaldehyde like pale plums  
we kept them in the back of the fridge  
months later someone our mother hired to  
clean the kitchen gave the unknown contents  
of that bottle a sniff threw them out craig and  
I were upset but no retrieval possible – still  
I managed later in life to redeem this loss in a  
fashion - when in one of my books I have my  
characters return to their summer cottage  
crank up the kitchen's dumbwaiter have the  
brother marvel at its contents, "Our tonsils are  
still here!" the power of prose has won again

*March 18, 2021*

**archival find # 47**

because of grampa's deafness he and my dad often communicated by writing back and forth – here's a scrap I just found where they are discussing a capable but hotheaded and opinionated overseer-employee: "Let's write him an excellent recommendation," my grampa scribbles, "and then find him a job as far away from us as possible!"

*March 25, 2021*

## **mental illness poem #1**

during this covid time we were warned that violence, depression, suicide, would increase; statistics have proved this to be the case. story: my sister a year older than I suffered sudden clinical depression in college she was hospitalized given shock treatments the then therapy returned home with blotto memory I was living at the farm going to Beloit College Pat rejoined our old bedroom I'd supposed she'd been cured but no, night after night in the other twin bed she wept while I talked nonsense, sang, recited nursery rhymes, until she'd finally fall asleep at 3 or 4 (she told me in later years, "Jack, you saved my life!") she transferred from U Wis to Beloit, where I and my brother were enrolled I had to lead her around like a baby for her erased memory was only starting to come back: two terms later my dad got a splendid note from his friend Jim Gage who was also Beloit's alum director citing the outstanding grade point averages of the three Dougan sibs, saying he was especially pleased with Patricia who had progressed from a D level in her first term to an A in her most recent: he was glad to have Ron's kids in BC! Pat's reaction: "I think my profs were flummoxed at how quickly I went from 'stupid' to 'superior!'"



*April 1, 2021*

**water poem #4**

the last century warned us that  
this century's most pressing need  
would be water my father in mid-last  
century predicted over-population  
both are conjoined twins we now know  
how much water it takes a cow to  
produce an udderful of milk how much  
water it takes a cornstalk to produce a  
single kernel on an ear we also know that  
the species arrogantly named sapiens is  
more profligate with its resources than  
any other on this fragile sphere the humble  
earthworm builds soil toward more fertility  
we pave it graze it rip it up wash it into the  
sea - and the aquifers that took thousands of  
years to fill and we're now pumping dry – what  
are those anyway? nothing to do with me!

*April 8, 2021*

## **Complaint poem #6**

*(by Mitch Hopper with slight tweaking by Jackie Jackson)*

We're at your mercy, young turks!  
you see us old turds as old jerks!  
with your buzz words throughout  
us nerds never doubt  
your language is made up of smirks.

It gives us ol' seniors the blues  
to see how you youngsters abuse  
our English so strong  
and what makes it so wrong  
is you can't even tie your own shoes!

My tech skills I know I'll outlive –  
dear friends, you will surely forgive  
but we oldies yet strive  
to do more than survive  
while you kiddies need hi-tech to live!

*April 15, 2021*

## **Un-name-able poem #1**

recently an image on facebook showed  
tan grey brown darkish slightly mottled  
perhaps "ground" I was puzzled why such  
an odd scene of nothingness was pictured  
I scrolled up then hit the stark edge the  
"horizon" of this whatever above apparent  
"sand": total blackness and centered in that  
black blank a bright still orb size of a BB –  
US! EARTH! first photo from surface of mars  
I saw this familiar stranger as palimpsest  
so small so silent so totally alone in the void  
yet I know it to be teeming with competitive  
though cooperative life from its first bacteria –  
and so overwhelmingly vulnerable! my  
throat contracted eyes teared up, overflowed

*April 22, 2021*

**Contrast poem #1**

well it's finally happened: after decades of  
boards haggling, yeas and nays voted on and off  
the yeas have won: casino hotel accompanying roads  
lights etc will spring up on the exact spot where  
I grew up shoveled manure detasselled corn  
wrote books about our round barn: I spose  
it's only fair for indigenous folk came first  
why shouldn't ho-chunk nation rake in some shekels  
they've all been ill-treated for eons – still, on a  
sphere we're slaughtering it's crazy to pave more  
of its richest farmland! meanwhile a neighbor to the  
north writes their tall-grass prairie restoration  
has begun invasive species zonked soil prepped seeded  
a hollow nearby cleared of buckthorn, bloodroot  
will soon see trillium return trout lily wild ginger  
dutchmans britches jack-in-the-pulpit: how glorious!

*April 29, 2021*

**community concert poem #3**

at a beloit community concert – I was  
maybe nine – the program was a tenor  
and baritone – I found their voices so  
moving I promised myself to hear them  
again some day knowing this possible  
since life is long I didn't save the program  
I probably never did hear them again or  
had I didn't realize these were the ones  
I've heard a number of tenors baritones  
in my life may still hear a few more but  
I've always remembered that one event  
the names of the men and pieces are gone  
only how it moved me to make that vow

*May 6, 2021*

**Archival find # 37: "For Parents Day"**

*(I found this saved in my folks' files, sent to them by myself,  
November 1978)*

Dear Mom and Dad, to say I appreciate the check is far too mild a word. You are the most generous people in the world and you have taught us all generosity too: with our money, our time, ourselves. You two are generous in ways that go far beyond money. I have learned about stewardship from you, and Grampa, and all your actions and "Life as Well as a Living" painted on the silo, even the good ol' Methodist Church! You both give totally. I have never been unaware nor unappreciative. With gratitude, Jackie

*May 13, 2021*

**Archival find #38 "Grandparents' Day"**

*(found in my parents' files, sent by a granddaughter in 1980)*

"Dear Grampa: Thanks so much for the check. I really do appreciate not the money but knowing that you and Grandma think about me and keep track of me (hard to do these days!) and are so regular with birthdays, Christmas, and all. And since I feel so strong about you, and knowing you think about me, I guess I better write and let you know I think about you, too, and more often than my sorry letter-writing habits would make it seem. Now that I'm a "working woman" I'm trying to get people to call me by my full name but since you are my grandparents please call me whatever you like. The longer I'm in the work force the less I like it. I believe working for yourself is the only way to go. I really want a job that's not locked into 9-5, punch the clock and be nice to the boss. My job is a good one, ok pay, and I like the people, but I'm just putting in time to get money so I can do what I really want. I'll write about that soon! I love you both!"

*May 20, 2021*

**Archival find #40**

*Found in files from 1980, granddaughter to grandparents:*

Dear Grandpa and Grandma, here's what I really want to be: A FARMER! More and more I find myself wanting to mess around with plants and gardens and compost heaps and worms and bees and ...oh, cane chairs, make toys... I guess I feel this photography stuff or any other job I've had isn't really a worthwhile thing to be doing. I get no satisfaction out of a day's work. But when the lettuce comes up in the garden, or the worms show up in the compost, or I finish caning the canoe seats, it's wonderful! There must be a way to make it pay. Love you both!



*May 27, 2021*

## **Children's Day Poem #1**

*Archival find: Ron Dougan writes  
his grown (and absent) kids.*

"I'm sitting in the cool office 7 am  
listening to the milk house hum  
below me clanging of pipes steam  
brawling into water and once in a  
while a shout above the hubbub.  
A dickcissel is whistling without.  
Fifteen boys will be here at 8 am  
to detassel. Did you know about  
the new Ladies Lounge? 144' by 40'  
on west side of cow yard. Makes  
one almost want to be a cow. No  
stress – no strain – no racial tension.  
Just One World. Erv's been shingling  
it, says it's like peeing in the ocean."

*June 3, 2021*

**muddle poem #?**

my laptop has a somethingerother  
that when poked will locate anything  
hidden in its mysterious maw I wish  
I had such a device for my dwelling-place  
I'm aware of certain bits I'm missing just  
not where they are the problem is more  
complex I find things by chance I have no  
recollection of ever having not even sure  
what they are maybe valuable maybe not –  
the ideal button would beep what's been  
forgotten or unknown, even better whether  
best left forgotten, unknown: come to think  
of it I need such a blipper for my brain

*June 10, 2021*

**Ron Dougan writes his grown kids # 2**

"To: All of you. RE: Damned if I know. I should go look at the little mudhole I confuse with a pond and see who's stopped by – it has been so dry that the pond is almost as big as a modest living room – ours for instance, which is three telephone rings across. Halfway to Janesville there's an old shed off the road and seven small-eared owls have been sitting there all winter. They come out sometimes and sit on posts along the road. I tried walking around one yesterday to see if I could twist its head off as it screwed its neck around watching me but it held fast."

*June 17, 2021*

**our times poem # who knows?**

climate stumbling  
bridges crumbling  
pundits pundling  
congress fumbling  
west va bumbling  
grumblers grumbling  
everything jumbling  
and here I sit eating  
a peanutbutter sandwich

*June 24, 2021*

**Archival find # 41: Booklet**

*(by daughter Gillian, 12, with  
careful colorful drawings)*

**SPRING**

A Book of Poems and Haikus, by Jill Jackson

© 1970, Jackson & Co., Rockford – Kent – New Haven

The motorboat's buzz  
Is a constant mosquito  
Across the blue lake.

In a dark alley  
A cat runs across the street  
To talk with a friend.

The waterfall's splash  
Echoes the tune of the birds'  
Happy melodies.

The earth smells of rain,  
A rose bud opens up.  
Some birds land in a field  
To drink from buttercups.  
Wind plays with water,  
The grass grows in the glen,  
All the birds are singing,  
Spring has come again.

*July 1, 2021*

**bullfrog poem #1**

these fat bulgy-eyed frog-slippers I keep  
here at the lake – clumsy to wear and if  
you do they leer up at you – but grandkids  
delight in them plus they were a gift from  
a daughter after we'd spent a rare summer  
with a bullfrog at our lake-end somewhere  
on the shore between us and the ledges  
we'd hear his basso gronk every night –  
the froggie slippers commemorate that  
frog that summer both giver and receiver  
we haven't had a soloist since – worrisome  
but I'm reassured by downlake swamp frogs  
still booming their deep groans far off  
prove bullfrogs are still here - last night  
near our rainy door my flashlight picked  
out a large and warty-ridged spotted toad  
a handsome fellow who stayed still long  
enough to have his verbal picture taken

*July 8, 2021*

### **Archival find #51**

*(I wrote this biblical parody in fourth grade.  
Us Dougan kids attended Sunday School regularly,  
Bibles in hand, so the language was familiar;  
this was a deliberate spoof.)*

Beautiful is thy tongue, O Shep,  
Tinged with the crimson of sunset,  
Hanging, panting, lolling, drooling.  
Dangling daintily from your mouth  
Gracefully swaying as your head  
Goes to and fro, beseeching pats.  
Beautiful is thy tongue, O Shep!

*July 15, 2021*

## **Heart operation #2**

*(In 2010 I had a pacemaker put in and experienced the lake differently.)*

I have two wires in my heart no big deal  
but they've altered my actions for a while  
also my observations this dawning I sat  
in the shallows not allowed yet to  
soak my sutures stretch my swimming  
arms after gazing a time over the still  
surface I noticed the action in the water  
in my lap small green fish with little black  
tabbed gills too big for minnies swimming  
under my knees over my ankles up and down  
the curve of my legs in lazy leisure but with  
an occasional quick dart nothing in it for them  
but curiosity nothing in it for me but delight



*July 22, 2021*

**nada poem #???**

there's a newyorker joke I've saved by  
a quirky artist: a man, laundry tub nearby  
is folding a sheet with a helper we all  
know sheets fold easier with help it  
seems ordinary till you notice the helper  
is a genie his nether regions dwindling  
back into an elaborate aladdin's lamp  
you realize then the man is wasting  
a precious wish (genies always give  
three) on sheet-folding: now you might  
ponder priorities that sometimes  
laundry may be the most important  
thing to be done – or the only thing

*July 29, 2021*

**specialness poem #2**

My friend relates, "My uncle was coming to take me to the circus. For days I was sick with anticipation. On the afternoon I wandered into the yard to wait. It was still, nothing to do. I began to notice things around me with more clarity than I ever had before: the serrated edge of an apple leaf, an iridescent bug, the everchanging clouds. When my uncle came I was almost sorry. The circus? anticlimax! too much cotton candy, confusion, headache. It's funny but my happy memory is of that perfect, peaceful hour rather than what kids are supposed to remember."

*August 5, 2021*

**words poem #9: love**

poet John Knoepfle was the start, writing in this space for Illinois Times I don't know if he included this poem but it's one of his best known: "Love is a bowl. If it breaks, mend it. If it won't hold water, fill it with apples." my friend Rodd however tells me the version he had from John is different: not "IF" it breaks but "WHEN" it breaks. What a difference in meaning in a single word!

*August 12, 2021*

**excitement poem #3**

in all these years in these Vermont woods  
in all these years beside this small lake  
I knew they were here but I never saw one  
now my kids have: slim like a weasel  
fluffier than a squirrel  
face like a teddy bear  
a FISHER! A FISHER CAT!  
(but, I hear, a mean varmint  
to meet in the woods)

*August 19, 2021*

**nurture poem #1**

it's too bad that little kids  
no longer learn nursery rhymes  
they lose rhythm, rhyme  
as well as vocabulary  
why, before kindergarten I knew  
curds and whey, tuffets, that  
if you didn't say your prayers  
beware of ganders, and despite  
kits, cats, sacks, wives,  
only one was going to saint ives

*August 26, 2021*

**non-news poem #?**

the afghan news is too awful  
for me to write about but  
I can't help wondering  
with all those refugees jammed  
against the airport fence  
are any yet vaccinated?

*September 2, 2021*

**quackery poem #1**

this vaccing biz has me unsure  
it's not a proven covid cure  
I'll try some different ways – the  
feed store sells that horse pill  
kills their gut bugs guess I'll buy  
some garget gargle, that's for cows  
with udder trouble – there must be  
cures for goats and sheep – I may  
need some to get to sleep – oh here  
is one I'm sure I lack – I'll buy it  
quick my tongue is black – it's for  
all those ducks who seek a quack

*September 9, 2021*

**roe vs wade poem # 1**

it's no new idea aristophanes  
wrote lysistrata in far-ancient  
greece here is my clever plan:  
crank up my chastity belt factory  
hasn't had much biz in recent times  
women'd hold the keys of course  
no lovey stuff = no pregnancies so  
no need for abortions I bet judges  
in power would cave pretty quick  
haven't figured yet rape, incest –  
could make smaller sizes for children  
maybe we'd need something to guard  
other animal life while the crisis lasts  
tho the ancient greeks apparently  
were tempted only by their own kind



*September 16, 2021*

**modern days poem #1**

hey senior do you have a plan  
to know the junior of your clan  
if flummoxed I have news for you  
this is what you need to do –  
go buy an item quite demonic  
found on shelves called electronic  
take some time to learn to use it  
(or don't bother; you'll abuse it)  
place your gizmo facing his  
both will then begin to whiz  
here's the ending of this story  
conversation: hunky dory  
tho you cannot choose the topic  
you're no longer age-myopic

*September 23, 2021*

**alzheimer's poem #1**

my beloved first writing prof  
had alzheimer's in his old age  
he had excellent care at a  
nearby facility: one of his  
nurses reported she'd found  
him wandering with agitation  
distraction asked the matter:  
"are you looking for something?  
have you lost something?" chad  
replied "I am looking for myself."

*September 30, 2021*

**great depression poem #5**

during the great depression my  
older sisters crossed the field to  
have a meal with the kids who  
rode in the school van that  
every day collected all us  
country kids my sisters returned  
in a kind of shock "We had only  
mustard sandwiches – that was  
ALL!" mother tried to explain the  
situation, these friends were kind to  
invite us; they were a tenant farmer  
family, surely had pitiful income  
a garden plot if lucky – no cow – how  
fortunate we were to have enough:  
all our hired men even daddy had  
had huge salary cuts my sisters never  
forgot mustard sandwiches even now  
in their late years – I was too little  
to attend that memorable lunch but  
I listened – it was the first time  
I'd heard of the great depression

*October 7, 2021*

**roe v wade poem #2**

during the great depression my aunt  
cooked for the road crew her husband  
worked on: pittance pay for both  
they had a toddler couldn't afford  
another child so when my aunt got  
pregnant she aborted herself –  
probably with the time-honored  
coat hanger – got septicemia nearly  
died – two weeks in the hospital, could  
never have another child never told  
our family – how do I know all this? her  
best friend confided in me late in her  
life and I have told no one till now

*October 14, 2021*

**Letter to friend from Jackie, May 1970**

my dad, I and the kids climbed the fence  
hiked through the woods to the  
great blue heron rookery my nieces  
discovered recently when dad told them  
to keep their eyes peeled, and they spotted  
great birds circling over a distant woods  
we spent two hours watching some 100  
huge birds flying to and from their nests  
sometimes seven nests in a tree – they'd  
brake in for a landing, let down their long  
clumsy legs – at any one time we could count  
fifteen or twenty sitting in their nests with  
dad's bird glasses we could look them right in  
the eye the kids gathered egg shells – large  
smoky blue and feathers – the woods  
verdantly lovely it was a perfect afternoon

*October 21, 2021*

### **Archival memory #35**

My Grandpa - minister turned farmer didn't go to church, said his deafness prevented his getting much from it but Grama loved all meetings she had a willing escort in Mr. Griffiths a long-time employee until Mr. G started courting Josie Grama's helper with all the big house work Grama lost her driver into church events - my big sister recalls Josie saying with shining middle-age face "Joan today is my wedding day!" but I recall Grama saying with an emphatic sniff "He doesn't love her he just wants a housekeeper!"

*October 28, 2021*

**Archival find # 52**

*(1960 Letter from out east to my parents)*

“I long for time on the farm.  
Participating in the daily work,  
letting the girls watch milking,  
bottling, gather eggs, sleep  
in the barn, find kittens in the hay.  
Bird watch at the pond,  
hike to the Catalpa Forest.  
I just long to be home.”

*November 4, 2021*

**Modern miracle (among many)**

This one, I can't say her name aloud  
but it's (ALEXA) she will turn lights  
on and off, read books out loud, update  
time temp news weather: play music from  
Handel to hip-hop and wish me a good day.  
At the start I always said "Thank you"  
for her favors yet soon realized she  
was just a robot so quit appreciation.  
However, ill manners can be as catching  
as genuine manners. I find myself ignoring  
real people's kindnesses: how, I wonder,  
does one manage a two-way street?



*November 11, 2021*

**Words from a friend on an earlier trauma**

"I am still in shock about MLK's assassination. I spent lonely hours in front of a television set choking on my shame, like millions of others. The conference I was attending was dealing with violence in America but we listened to lightweight minds exchange banalities, trivialities about unimportant aspects of large questions. My class was also moved by the assassination; now they are eagerly behind the project I suggested recently, using the president's report on the commission of civil disorders. They balked at first but now they are humbly proud."

*November 18, 2021*

## **SliPPery SloPe Poem #1**

kids, ready for a sort of joke? and a reason why you don't see many spelling bee champions in jail? an item from a british newspaper labeled "Fatal Slipp" reads "Local police had a surprise Wednesday for a suspect in the case of obscene letters. They rounded up a dozen possibilities and had each write the word 'surprise,' which the writer of the letters had consistently spelled with a double 'p.' They arrested their man!"

*November 25, 2021*

**Archival Memory Poem #42**

When my first cousin got angry he'd shout to his mother, "I'm going to run away!" She'd calmly reply, "Tell me when you're leaving and I'll have a hard-boiled egg for you." Eugene always reconsidered; never ran away. Older, drafted into WWII, he was kissing his mother goodbye. My aunt held out her hand. "Here's your hard-boiled egg."

*December 2, 2021*

## **Music Poem #27: Bach Plus**

Madison String Synfonia rehearsed every Saturday afternoon: my sisters and I were privileged to play in it. Our vastly talented conductor was an inspiration to us all. The music, the discipline, plus the fun of playing under “Teacher” shaped our lives. A story: Once we gave a concert in a famous Madison church. At our dress rehearsal the organist of that church found his organ in exact tune with our orchestra. Miss Endres invited him to join us on our finale – to thunder in at the very end of Bach’s “Great Fugue.” That finale was spectacular; audience cheered, crowded up to praise our leader. An elderly woman exclaimed to her (she told us later) “That magnificent fugue! At the end it sounded JUST LIKE AN ORGAN!”

*December 9, 2021*

**conjecture poem # 2**

charlotte, emily, ann, branwell:  
well known names – three for  
famous works one for debauchery  
– but there were six bronte progeny –  
two older daughters unsung but from  
their deaths from pneumonia in the  
drafty cold wet boarding school they  
attended (read of its grisly details in  
jane eyre written long after by the  
now-eldest sister) the widower father  
snatched his remaining daughters  
home to haworth the rest is known  
but I think about those lost kinder –  
not even a sentence about them though  
the names are recorded: maria, elizabeth  
had they lived might there now be a  
cluster of five orbs, a second pleiades?

*December 16, 2021*

**foolery? poem # 1**

when p.t. barnum's big top became  
overheated overcrowded on a hot  
summer day he'd erect a poster:  
TO THE EGRESS an eager throng  
would follow the arrows find  
themselves shunted outside  
at present we are overheated  
overcrowded: are we now egressing  
ourselves from our star-bedecked  
canvas no stub clutched for a return?

*December 23, 2021*

**Poem by my daughter Damaris**

To the Winter Solstice:

For those of us who still go out  
And yearn for signs of sun return  
On winter solstice, mystical,  
The balance-pause at end of breath;  
It seems that we should brush a nest  
In snow for pinecone eggs to rest,  
Or catch the hands of trees  
On fleetest impulse whirl until a  
Spark within the wind breathes heat.  
We living things, of matter  
Made from light might show our trust  
In stars. This very night, stretch out  
In rays of warmth and earth affection  
Preface: sun with sun conception.

*December 30, 2021*

**metaphor poem #1**

I guess I'm getting to the age  
where I should be writing out  
my last wishes – of course we  
should all do this at any age –  
no telling what's coming down  
the pike – for mine the music  
should be handel bach brahms  
but I also want (minus those  
first & last schmaltzy stanzas)  
– the chatanooga choo choo





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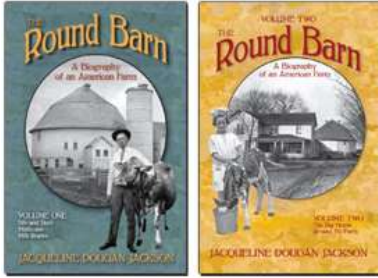
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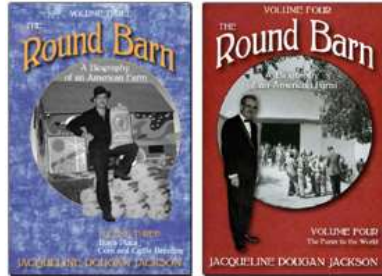
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