

Liberty Après les Heures

*A collection of poetry by
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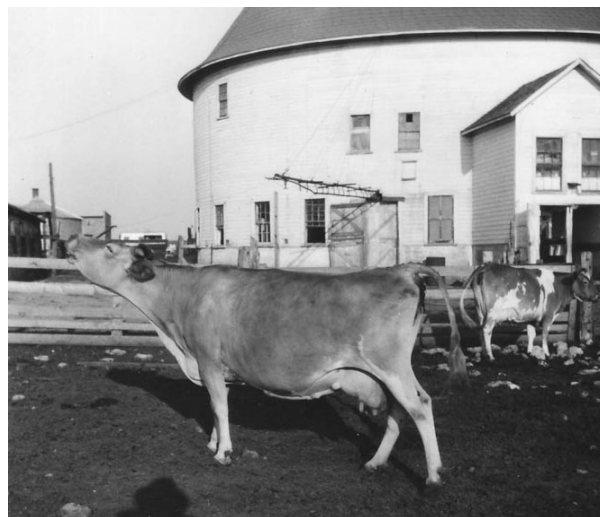




ANNIVERSARY DEDICATION

Ten years now of Liberty
on Page 3 of Illinois Times.

this year's collection
is dedicated to
the many of you
who keep shoving
this fermenting critter
from the ease
of the stall
to the work
of the pen



January 2

newyear's poem #9

hi folks and happy january I have
good news we can't destroy our earth
no matter how we whack it frack it
pollute it subject it to every outrage
we can't destroy it we can do in a lot
of species including ourselves but this
terrestrial ball will keep on orbiting
it can change itself radically though
without our help when the biggest
volcano on earth blows it will destroy
life as we know it I'm talking about
yellowstone you can't see the cone
shape except from outer space it's
sixty miles across it will be worse than
the dinosaur killoff NPR says we'll get
some warning but where to go I asked
my nephew he guides at yellowstone
well he said those slugs and shrimp
that live on sulphur by those flumes
in the deepest sea and don't need sun
they'll be all right but it will take a
couple billion years for us to re-evolve
from them-- you ask where to go? I
plan to be in the middle of the caldera
with my lawn chair and a six pack

January 9

appreciation poem # 4

demi if you are anywhere out there
in the great everywhere where you
can hear my heart I am thanking you
for your minnesota boots and heavy
sock liners we are having minnesota
weather and now that I've had the
foot ops your boots fit and are exactly
what I need right now along with your
minnesota gloves cap coat scarf you
have clothed me today I am grateful

January 16

familystory poem #23

our family traveled after the war
once gas wasn't rationed we went to
florida over christmas played on the
beach en route we slept in those little
separate tourist cabins that predate
motels mother final-checked the room
my sisters and I had been in found her
good fountain pen under a bed no
ballpoints back then for the next 20 miles
we were berated—first that we hadn't
even asked then left it behind her anger
spent she finally opened her purse dropped
the pen inside right beside an identical pen
why didn't you say you hadn't taken it?
mother wailed chagrined but we each thought
a sister the culprit so we'd all stayed silent

January 23

strange weather poem #7

oddest bit of weather yesterday so odd
it was mentioned on the local news mild
out sun yet it was suddenly snowing and
no ordinary snow - evenly spaced, blue
between, and no ordinary flakes either
but snow pancakes big as silver dollars
they didn't drift down hither thither nor
rapidly but at a steady near-rapid pace
I haven't even the words for it maybe
like big white polka dots on a dark blue
dress the speed and size and pacing all
combined they were divided like domino
dots they came down for about ten minutes
then it was over no wind most missed it
but when I saw the strange snow through
the window I dropped my project and ran
outside they were not snowball shaped but
flat and when they plopped on the walk
they melted and then it was over ten minutes

January 30

arachnid poem #13

I'm sure you want to hear about spider sex
males do not have copulatory organs they
spin a small silk mat deposit their semen
on it dip in their feelers then plunge these
into the wife's abdomen a male is usually
much smaller than the ferocious female
who will eat him during the act if he is
clumsy certainly afterwards to prevent this
some males tie up the legs of their mate while
she is in an amorous mood or attempt to make
her less hungry by offering his lady-love a fly
wrapped in a neat silken package how do I
know these details I refer you to *The Spider*
by Crompton old book but (likely) true facts

February 6

music poem #16

my sister was nine when mom took
her young violinist to a fritz kreisler
concert in milwaukee at its close
they went backstage the famous artist
was surrounded he was perhaps sixty
joan wormed her way through adult
legs till she was directly before him
gazing up in adoration he noticed her
laid a hand on her head said a single
word—"child" --so quietly so gently
so reverently that it contained the
promise of all the past all the future

February 13

on a monday morning

*by John Knoepfle, former poet
of this column; 91 on Feb. 4*

well dear heart
what to say this sunshine hour
it is a blue sky day
the threat of the storm is gone

you will be out awhile
as I struggle with these lines

what happened to ambition
the desire to put something
down on a page
something arresting
careful readers will cherish

I don't know
how to say I love you
as if it was the first time
anyone had thought to say this

well I do you know
and have these sixty years

well now a dog is barking
and my train of thought
slips out of mind

I leave you these poor lines

come home soon
they will still be here
these husbandly ideas
waiting for you my dear

February 20

opera poem #4

just viewed a magnificent aida from
the met cast of thousands egyptian
sets animals no elephants though
pleated skirts familiar music but I
have to confess in that final scene
with the lovers radames and aida
entombed beneath the altar amneris
prostrate up top snuffling (the split
set sort of resembles a dollhouse)
the pathos is somewhat lost on me
I keep hearing mr rosewater from
kurt vonnegut's god bless you mr
rosewater when that gentleman
watching a performance of aida
leans over the balcony, calls out
"you'll last longer if you don't sing"
a line I've found useful in a number
of situations not all involving song

February 27

estrus poem #1

how can you tell when a cow is in heat well
looking is the most sure way to detect estrus
but if she's far off in a field with other cows it
helps to have a dye patch on her flank which
when disturbed will give her a big red splotch
(yes virginia cows have homosexual tendencies
and will harry another cow) if a bull is present
an altered bull you don't want any old bull for
your cows he can wear a chin ball marker that
hangs under his chin like a giant pencil stub it
will scribble with dye on her back when he tries
to breed then there is the electronic chip glued
near her tail head she will signal back to her
owner's computer that she's waiting for the
inseminator more info yet can be transmitted
by an embedded chip which will report on her
temperature indicate belly burbles any health
problems to the farmer as he quaffs his coffee
in front of his screen and pokes a key to alert
the breeders co-op next question please

March 6

rye poem #1

I found an essay my sister wrote when she
was a college freshman her prof must have
asked for an autobiography it is of course
interesting to me for we shared the same
childhood and some of the same memories
I find it telling how certain things were strong
enough for both of us to have later written
them down one such is that our father sowed
the yard of our new farmhouse to rye I recall
it was timothy but pat's essay says rye well
close enough anyway he did it for a nurse
crop but it killed the new grass rather than
nursing it now why did we both single out
this item when there are a thousand others
you'd think more memorable pat writes
"we had to battle our way through the rye
to the front door" maybe it's because we
didn't know anyone else whose yard came
up to their chins she ends her essay nicely
I feel I am halfway between childhood and
adulthood if I hang on tight I'll come out
of one and go into the other right side up
the paper has no grade I'd give it an A

March 13

storypoem #14

in the car the whole family driving
north I was eight I discovered a metal
whistle a slush pump by blowing and
sliding the plunger up or down one could
make swooping sounds I soon realized
by stopping on a note then moving the
plunger spot to spot one could make tunes
I was totally entranced it was one of those
rare moments in life of absolute bliss until
mother said jackie stop that noise it's
bothering everyone I held the forbidden
treasure in my lap the ride turned sour

March 20

first day of spring poem

*My snowdrops are up, shivering, but visited
by honeybees, and so I offer you my mother's
love poem to my dad, written in 1924, while
their May marriage was pending.*

Because of You
by Vera Wardner (not yet Dougan)

This year, because I know you,
Spring is lovelier than it ever was before:
The skies more blue;
Spring magic in the swelling buds that hold
New life. And on this day
I never knew the wind to be so gay!
The sun so gold!
The earth mystic with promise—
Trees serene with secret joy!
The spring enchantment's in the air anew
I wonder why it is—because of you!

March 27

babylon #1

woke up worked drank coffee worked
emails phone calls worked rearranged
manuscript last minute stuff worked
worked didn't think a single thought
about you till I was driving late to
church and the car was flooded with
all that baroque music you loved so well
played so well it was then I bawled I
remember an oratorio we sang in the
teen choir in the methodist church I
grew up in: choir practice was the
social event of the week I learned more
there than music—but we did sing
and sing words, sometimes scripture
“by the waters of babylon I sat down and
wept when I remembered thee . . . if I
forget thee o zion may my right hand
forget its cunning” oh my first born I will
never forget you even when both my hands
lose cunning it is alright though to forget
and then remember and weep and forget
remember again weep again sometimes
not weep for a day or even two days for
you who stayed, chose to stay, in babylon

April 3

musicpoem, sort of #1

when we were kids we took our music
lessons in madison every saturday at
the wisconsin school of music a big old
house with sound pouring out of every
fissure from squeaks squawks scales to
cdardas and the goldberg variations
when you entered the house you faced
a fireplace never any fire but on the
mantle a ceramic dish shaped like the
palms of two cupped hands ready to
offer you candy or some sort of goodie
or conversely to receive something
never anything in it one saturday my
sister patty put a little sign above the
dish: "Help P.D." when she came back
the next week it held a dollar and forty
three cents in change pat kept the cash
after all it said help P D and she was
P D we all marveled who would give to
P D not knowing who or what P D was
it must've been those expectant hands
or maybe the cacophony of all that music

April 10

poop poem #2

back to unpoetic topics here are two
grossies about dog poop! I was in
madison working with my nephew
he lives three blocks from my sister
he wasn't up yet I figured I'd go
share a cup of coffee with my sister
it was raining I have to tell you
about my sister she is my big sister
three years older and even at our
advanced ages she says comb your hair
stand up straight corrects my grammar
so when she let me in and pointed to
her front mat and said "Look at that!"
in an indignant tone I thought she meant
"At your age haven't you learned yet to
wipe your wet feet?" so I wiped them in
dog poop of their new puppy it took a few
babbled minutes for her to understand
why I'd done such a thing it gave my
brother-in-law a huge laugh--the other
story? I related the above to a friend
she told of a friend's son a paperboy
he'd sit on the rug beside his paper pile to
fold them a call came one day to the editor
a customer reported she'd received dog
poop folded up in her paper one should
tell things in threes so here's a bonus
lincoln library's central display is called
"everyone poops" it has an easter theme
don't ask me why but go vote on your
favorite diarama even frankenstein poops

April 17

just-is poem #1 (or #1000)

a car
hit a car
hit a car
hit a car
hit my friend
ron stopped
innocently
at a red light
he checked out
okay at the
hospital I
could add
philosophic
clichés here
web of life
out of the
blue left field
but you can
do that for
yourself with
little effort

April 24

found poem: letter from my father

To the editor of the Beloit Daily News:
This note is addressed to the family who discarded their family cat on Colley Road just east of the I-90 underpass. This cat visited all the area's family farms. Some fed her. She finally found our homestead which is forty rods north of the road. We too fed her, but we didn't need a cat. She found some mice, poisoned, because our warehouse must be protected against rodents. She went into decline, could not eat. Today we had to dispose of her in spite of her wanting love and welcome into our home. So your sick cat is dead. We have numerous animals abandoned on our property. Maybe the most memorable was a dog locked inside our screen porch to be found the next morning. Or was it the six kittens, still sightless, left in a box at the foot of our lane? Whoever abandoned their pet cat in early March, for whatever reason, might like to know how she suffered and how her life ended on March 29, 1985. R.A. Dougan, Beloit

May 1

philanthropy poem #1

lately I have been writing a lot about
john rockefeller prentice grandson of
john d my new book is full of him and
his tireless work in producing better
cattle I knew him he gave me a copy of
treasure island in latin a mt hope classic
his father had arranged with scribners
so that his children would have books
interesting to read as he flogged them
into learning latin and ancient greek as
living languages it has the original
wyeth illustrations rock signed it to me
“macte virtute!”—“practice virtue”—
I write about how he poured his money
into research hiring all the best scientists
how he was considered a rich man yet he
was broke borrowing from his mother his
sisters how he was generally despised
because he was “wealthy” and probably
also by jealousy for his research was two
years ahead of the universities and don’t
we all know universities should be doing
the research not rich men (do you realize
all the advances for women’s reproductive
health have come through cow research?
the pill to in vitro?) anyway rock spent
millions developing a vessel to transport
liquid nitrogen at almost absolute zero it
was to carry perishable semen anywhere
in the world it is vital to every hospital in the
world now—for transplants and many other
uses did rock prentice patent it? he would
have gained multi-billions but no he gave it
to the world a gift freely given I write all this
thinking of montsanto patenting genes and
everything else their scientists violate; they
sue small organics off the land etc what has
rich montsanto given the world but gmo’s?

May 8

it's a strange world poem #2

in the car I bellowed along with
tannhauser that tremendous heavy
measured theme with all those
little squirrelly bits you hardly
hear sort of like a heavy tree trunk
with tiny spring leaves fluttering on
the thin branches around it or a
giant striding surrounded by swarms
of gnats good gnats a good giant then
lohengrin came on the prelude to the
third act with those cymbals bombastic
trombones which suddenly calm into
one of the sweetest most moving duets
in all music with the oboe and cellos I
played that cello part once and you
wonder how people who write such
incredible heart-wringing music can
have anything but pure souls yet
wagner was a vicious anti-semite

May 15

frustration poem #gazillion

when you're hunting for something
really important and can't find it
you turn up a lot of other stuff that
should've been tended to yesterday
or last week or last year or even before
they flood you with intents purposes
unfulfilled and even if you find what
you were looking for which is only
half likely you end up in total dis-
traction--self-discrimination--and
go off and play a computer game

May 22

immortality poem #2

I wonder if it ever crossed tenniel's mind
when he was having fun with caterpillars
smoking hookahs a neck stretched up to the
tree tops a lizard flying out a chimney a cat
vanished except for its grin that he would
achieve immortality not for his great political
cartoons so popular in punch but through alice

and I wonder whether arthur sullivan in
whatever heaven he's in feels resentful that
all that anyone remembers of the music he
composed the music he counted on to bring
lasting fame are the operettas written with
gilbert--gilbert's name coming always first
those will last forever the two had a rocky
romance even enmity at the end sullivan
does have one non g & s song remembered
but he must feel as though he's the lost chord

May 29

musicpoem #32

driving listening to music over NPR
visualizing choreography costumes I
got to wondering what music can't you
see dancers real music I mean well bach
but no there are all those gigue gavottes
but a brandenburg? the third? dancers
would be exhausted before the end of the last
movement dervishes unless they took turns
oho here's good ol' flight of the bumble bee
didn't know it was by rimsky korsikoff those
dancers would fall dead in only 1 min 20 secs

June 5

quandary poem #4

“We were just married,” Harlan the herdsman told me, “and we’d moved into the apartment over the milkhouse. They were butchering. Grampa Dougan climbed the stairs, knocked, and stood there holding the cow’s tail —long, brown, the white hairy plume on its end, the bloody stump at the top. He handed it to my bride. ‘There, lassie, is your wedding present,’ and left beaming. Neither of us knew what to do with it; we finally sneaked out that night and buried it in a ditch half a township away. Only later did we realize Daddy Dougan assumed any farm wife knew how to make oxtail soup and that he’d really presented us with a handsome gift.”

June 12

ingenuity story #1

back in the days of old-fashioned devices
a huge group picture at a Y camp the
photographer's camera would sweep
the crowd so that one end was recorded
before the other well there was this kid
who stood on the beginning end of the line
as soon as the shutter clicked ran like hell
behind everyone to stand at the other end
thereby appearing twice in the same photo
grinning of course why do I tell you this
it reminds me somehow of a student at the
start of SSU he cased the school a few days
returned at the start of the second quarter
signed up for enough classes to complete
a degree in one term paying one fee his
schedule was a miracle grid he attended
all classes took all exams met all deadlines
postponed all papers took all incompletes
then at his leisure finished off his work
got his non-credits changed to grades
and graduated you can bet the university
closed that loophole in a hurry you were
now forbid to take more than 16 hours
without permission of your advisor I've
sometimes wondered what's happened
to both those kids I'm sure they've gone
far not by illegalities but by their ability
to leap into unimagined opportunities

June 19

spur of the moment poem #1

the woman ahead of me in the
checkout line paid for her groceries
in quarters the cashier made many
little stacks and checked them again
and again to be sure there were four
in each the woman was more defiant
than embarrassed my cheerful remark
was probably out of line looks like you
robbed your piggy bank she said to me
you'll be here some day my reply was
I already have been

June 26

where I grew up poem #3

the house is gone the bam is gone
the metal com bins are gone the
drying bins gone the com storage
building gone the com processing
building gone (the one with the
mural on it you could see from town)
even the old smokehouse is gone but
the asparagus still grows in abundance
wild roses bloom at the end of the lane

July 3

on remembering poem #7

daddy bathed us four in the tub
a gentle word bathe but with daddy
it was four left legs aloft scrubbed down
with a soapy cloth four left arms stuck out
ditto all turn around four more arms
four more legs stand up four fronts
four bums turn around four backs
four butts faces up eyes screwed
shut against the whirling cloth eight
ears dug into four necks everybody
down rinse climb out here's your towels
it wasn't brutal just a rapid assembly line

I recalled this to my mom when I was grown
her feelings were hurt-- "I bathed you children
every night one at a time maybe two no rush
all gentle don't you remember? your dad
only scrubbed you a few times in your whole
growing up!" I wish I'd said then her care
about everything was remembered in our
bones blood it made us thrive but most often
it's the blatant bizarre that sears into brains

July 10

phish poem #1

well odd things happen I am at a phish
concert in saratoga springs not exactly at
more beside in my car but I can hear the
throbbing drums sometime a wail of a
vocalist the crowd's roar I wandered
that crowd thronging the park's entrance
quite a few with a bent finger aloft that
means they want to buy a cheap ticket
I was offered wine a can of lite beer pot
a granola bar I accepted the bar since
our supplies were down to peanut butter
and chips on this long drive to vermont
my grandson took the humus dregs and
crackers into the concert where he stood
in bliss for hours in the rain he'd earned
this unplanned hiatus in our trip he'd
driven all day with calm and expertise
through violent downpour after violent
downpour you couldn't see the road the
other cars I didn't want to spend the
bucks though to hear phish but why
shouldn't he I do think I deserve an
award as best grandma of the year

July 17

vermontpoem #36

I weep a little
this first night here
giving this place up
where I've been coming
summers for sixty years
the colorful poetry wall
in the bathroom blake
tolkien leguin tennyson
my own kids' writings
the lake quiet out front
clouds shield a half moon
I'm surrounded by my
dead daughter her
creativity her presence
fills this place but even
this place she so loved
couldn't save her and I
weep a little for all of us
mortals who live to give up

July 24

specificity poem # 1

grandchild cressie not yet three
busy with pencil and paper--her
mom heard her say "grass"--
thought this worth a look since
pictures so far were circles and
scribbles nothing really specific
sure enough a short row of
little lines at the bottom seemed
grasslike above was an oblong
a line crossed it near the top
with a small blob on each end
a body with arms, hands? tell me
about this said her mom oh said
cressie that's just a straight line

July 31

vermontpoem #37

a tiny lavender blossom
five petals fringed leaf
on the path to the shore
a moment of happiness

August 7

vermontpoem #38

on our first night here 2 a.m. awful
crying strange not an owl could
it be a dog trapped somewhere
in the woods no not a dog it's
like nothing I've ever heard but
what to do I can't go plowing
into the brush but then came quiet
next day a report—the day before
all had been eating at the long row
of picnic tables a raccoon came
stumbling under the tables between
everyone's feet they scrambled onto
the benches the animal swayed out
into the trees it seemed sick in body
and mind the police said shoot it--it
sounds like hydrophobia but it was
gone I think it died later that night in
the woods near me in terrible pain
alan heard it too and he agrees

August 14

norway poem #1

we climbed a stony path to our snug
cottage my granddaughter and me
I walked with decorated poles
their tips blunted our hosts' cottage
was below they raised their shades
to show us they were up we raised
ours to show we'd breakfasted and
were ready for the day (the fridge
was stocked with cheeses meats breads
brown eggs juices even two cans of beer)
our time was gentle unhurried a walk
along a wharf where a viking ship was
being built a copy of the real one in
the oslo museum fish soup at a
seaside table a whole afternoon on
the sunny sea threading our way
among small and large islands
humping their smooth rocks from
the water like great whale backs
another day among the farmlands
green gold fields barley wheat onions
carrots a white church 500 years old
its graveyard where Nils' parents are
at rest the farm Nils was raised on
we know this man for he worked
a while at the farm I was raised on
we twice ate at a quiet restaurant
our view an ancient stone lighthouse
its light had been glowing coals in a
basket raised on a pole seagulls are
alert to snatch our bread Marie tells
us the name of this rocky island tip
is Verdens Ende—"End of the World"

August 21

norwaypoem #2

I am in norway how
refreshing to be in a spot
where everyone speaks
a tongue that is not mine

norwegian is a musical language
light its phrases end in upbeat
reflecting the country and people
at home I can always tell when a
person speaking english is native
norwegian the accent the rhythm
is unmistakable a delight to hear

August 28

laborday poem #1

a 1952 news item just found:

“Dairy Workers to 5-Day
Week” --ten years before
this clipping I heard my
grandfather say “We can’t
go to a six-day week until
we breed a six-day cow.”

September 4

grampa poem #3

in a letter to his second son
my grampa writes, “If I try
to tell you what you like and
what you dislike I may play
the role of the shoe maker who
was fitting a pair of shoes to
a customer. The customer said,
‘These shoes pinch.’ The cobbler
replied, ‘What do you know
about it? You are no cobbler!’”

September 11

dairystate poem #2

our area of wisconsin has lovely
lively names afton avalon tiffany
carvers rock beckmans mill darien
delavan elkhorn hog hollow I went
with my grandfather to a township
meeting of some sort in emerald grove
the little white church where they all
met was spare in decoration but had
many tall clear windows it was as full
of sunset light as san chapelle a site
I would someday visit I was enchanted
yet emerald grove on its single strand
had a gawdawful antique store with
stuff spilling out and filling the lots
on either side with rusting-car-type
junk a place to gasp at it is still there
the carbuncle of the tiara yet recently
at its battered counter inside I bought
a milk bottle from our defunct dairy
it had our name on it a true amber gem

September 18

trauma poem # 6

royce by pulling
that trigger
you've deprived
yourself my
grandkids'
growing up
their school and
sports successes
their loves and
losses and given
them instead a
burden they'll
never outgrow
though its
present pain
will recede
somewhat
in time

September 25

midsummer vermont #22

today's excitement—
very early morning
erratic drumming
more a thudding
slow with pauses
could it be? I'd heard
them in the woods but
never seen one yet here
one was—a piliated
woodpecker on the
dead tree by the porch
clear in silhouette
long sharp beak, crested
head, supple neck, body
big as a hen but slim
it circled the trunk
hammering breakfast
no rat-a-tat drilling like
smaller woodpeckers
it tore chunks off the
wood the lake beneath
soon strewn with large
irregular chips I swam
to gather one from the
water after it flew away
gillian on the porch
actually saw it arrive
a flurry of feathers
saw it settle upright on
the trunk begin to work:
this can last a heart
quite a while

October 2

springfield 66 poem #1

busy time this fri eve in springfield
route 66 gala already begun hard to get
to the old pharmacy to see tom handy's
photos of palms and their latticed shadows
jim hawker's unforgettable bored child
embracing a curb it was like those mazes
in a kid's puzzle book you start out reach
a dead end retrace erase detour till with luck
you find your destination it was harder still
to return a library book to 7th street I nearly
drove over the grass through the multicolored
fountains but managed to park nearby walked
along a pavement past a row of gleaming
'66 autos lined up in neat fashion against the
sidewalk their fronts wide open gaping maws
waiting for tongue depressors big as table tops
to make them gargle "ah" even in the street's
dimness you could see all the way to their
tonsils well even beyond—no guards--an
awesome sight well worth the inconvenience

October 9

ebola poem #1

the thin child perhaps nine
leaning against the slim tree
weeping her mother just dead
the mother who helped a
collapsed pregnant friend into
a taxi to get her to a hospital
the trip was in vain the woman
died so did all the others who
helped the woman now no one
will go near this crying child
no one will touch her for she
had touched her mother the
photo of this scene was on the
front page of the madison
state journal yesterday even
the photographer shot the
picture from a distance

October 16

vermontpoem # 41

this morning the lake is still
no ripples mar the surface
not even my own as I swim
no little swallows (black tops
white bellies) dip and wheel
to catch their insect breakfast
their name I think is “least
swallow” usually there’s a dozen
no rower in a swift scull near the
far shore no plip of a feeding fish
but a thin mist is rising for the air
is 48 degrees above the warm water

last night was full of activity though
two owls calling to each other from
far sides of the hills a hoo-hoo duet
our lonely loon’s eerie cry—again—
then again—followed by a loony laugh
and when I woke at three and looked
from the porch onto the glass mirror a
million stars had made the lake a sky

October 23

retirees' lament poem # 1

the State has stole our pensions
the State has stole our pensions
the State has stole our pensions
sing loo-di-doo-di-doo

that big ole bag of money
we gave our savings to
the State just took and stole it
sing loo-di-doo-di-doo

there must have been some Interest
'twas a humongous sum
the State could have that gladly
if they'd just left us some!
sing loo-di-doo-di-doo-di-doo
sing loo-di-doo-di-doo

October 30

flu shot poem #1

this is flu shot season my friend
annette writes she can't take one
on account of raw egg allergy she
adds, "I'll always remember my
grandmother's recollections of the
1918 Spanish flu. So many people
died in Chicago that her parish
priest couldn't keep up with the
funeral masses. Instead he stood
in the street with holy water and
sprinkled hearses as they passed
the church. She and my grandfather
avoided the flu, so she said, by taking
a shot of whiskey every night. She
drank her shot-a-day until she died."

November 6

remembering summer #5

50 degrees when I swim
this early sunny august
morn a stiff north wind
but these choppy waves
are the same temperature
as yesterday and last week

while I dry off on the hill
I am gladdened to see
before a rotting log a
sentinel stand of pure
white indian pipes they've
sprung up in the night not
grown in that spot before

November 13

poetrywall poem # 1

*My granddaughter, Cressida, wrote
this poem on the Poetry Wall of our
summer cabin when she was 10. She
added a drawing of a cat calmly walking
away, a dead bird on the ground behind it.*

the sleek cat stalks its prey
silent feet creep up
closer
closer
closer to its prey
closer
flat on its stomach
crawling low
as if a herd of
predators
were chasing
after it
suddenly
front feet fly
back feet follow
silently
it pounces
it lands
it kills

November 20

farm poem #38

my sister tried
rolling down
the ramp of the
round barn
in a barrel
she regretted it

November 27

thankful poem #7

faithful underpants
this is your last day
your gaping holes
can no longer be
ignored your elastic
is too flabby
it's the ragbag
tonight so I will
say to you what
folks say to me
have a good day
although when
they say it to me
I don't know
as you now know
whether to especially
appreciate this day
as the last--
might my own
elastic snap? so I
suggest to you
we join in living
every day with
thanksgiving

December 4

family poem # 22

at ten I went with my grandparents
to visit my iowa cousins polly in
ninth grade took me to her latin class
I deciphered the first few exercises
a farmer called agricola later I said
to an older cousin latin makes you think
she said “uncle wess asked me once
did I know what was an educated man
when I shook my head he said ‘an educated
man is one who has taught his mind to think
his hand to act and his heart to feel’—you
can see where I’ve copied it in my notebook”
I copied it into my own notebook too it was
for me a description of grampa himself

December 11

winter poem # 4

on bitter nights when deep drifts
blocked our long country lane we
hiked up left the car on the road
snowpants boots our white breath
searing our windpipes we followed
daddy's tracks as he pushed the way
to light and warmth I loved those treks
the sky its richest black and the stars!
the stars so bright so close you could
swipe down handfuls in your mittens
in your arms hug the frozen milky way

December 18

sleighing poem # 1

as to one horse open sleighs we sibs
sat in ours sang jingle bells but if we
jiggled too hard and fell out it was either
into hay on one side or a bin of oats on
the other for it was propped way up in
the loft unused unnoticed balanced on
the tall woodengold wall that separated
the two sections of the upper round barn
its runners must have been secured on a
small platform we never asked about it
begged a real ride it was a relic just one
of the many things around the place we
took for granted then it disappeared none
of us noticed either for the sport had
limited fun without going anywhere the
play usually lasted only a few verses
when I remembered in my late teens or
twenties and asked my dad where it was
he said mr bumstead borrowed it I knew
the bumstead farm beyond the hill farm
they brought milk to the dairy in a pickup
I'd never seen a sleigh there well didn't he
return it no he backed a tractor into it—
it was pretty bunged up well couldn't it be
fixed it's a valuable antique didn't you
make him do something at least gather up
the pieces for us no I just let it go there is
no good ending to this story I wonder if my
sibs even remember or if a bumstead does

December 25

PARODOX

By Vera Wardner Dougan

*Holidays are portrayed as times of
rejoicing but as we all come to know
they are often fraught with grief. It
seems appropriate to share this poem
at this season. It was written by my
mother in 1925; I have it in a booklet,
Mirrors, that she put together for my
father, family, and friends, before I was born.*

If you desire happiness,
Purchase it with tears;
The kind one buys with laughter
Lasts not many years.

Give away all that is yours,
And rich indeed you'll be.
What you love best, only keep
Within your memory.

If you wish to welcome Love,
Prepare for more than one;
Pain with Love comes hand in hand
And stays when Love is gone.

If you would hold a treasure dear,
It may be well to know
A thing is never truly yours
Till you can let it go.

December 31

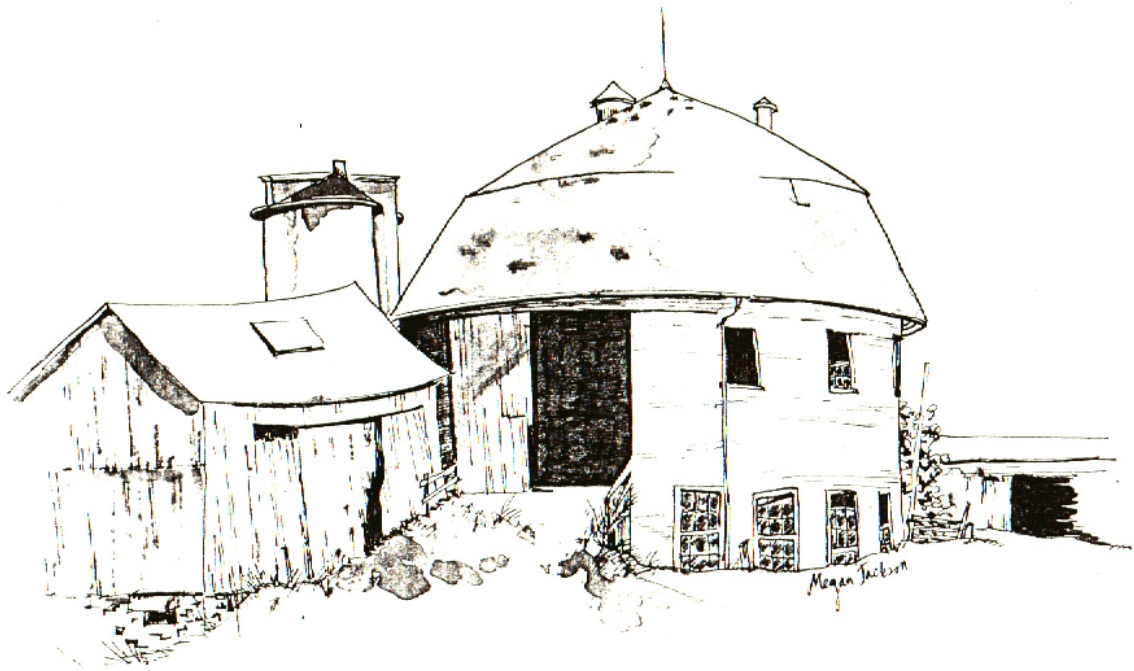
december end poem

a friend helping me clean my kitchen
or try to clean it brought me a long flat
rusty item resting across her palms what
is this I said doesn't everyone keep a
world war one bayonet in their pantry?

about that weapon: my dad picked it up
in france 1924 from belleau wood where
was the worst carnage trenches by now
crumbled overgrown with weeds shrubs
thousands on thousands killed here they
had to clamber over the slaughtered to fire
(though the enemies had a christmas eve
truce drank wine together sang peace on
earth) my dad drove a taxi for american
and british tourists to see the area
curiosity yes but for most a handkerchief
to mouth eyes to grieve son or lover stand
near the spot where that life ended
they thought my dad a frenchman he
spoke no english to his passengers as he
pointed out poet joyce kilmer's grave his
main job was nearby a sort of peace corps
work being a big brother to fatherless
boys games hikes tenting beneath the
vast tree where napolean once stood

did the man who owned that bayonet kill
someone before he was himself a victim is
there blood mixed with rust in my pantry?

I gave away the shell casings from my
dad's bottom dresser drawer when I
cleared his room but I kept the blade



A Word From the Author

I've described before (see Liberty 2012) how I, a non-poet, came to write all these poems--Roland Klose, then editor of Illinois Times, wanted me to--and I've been grateful to him ever since for widening my world.

I haven't written about my starting to write, in general, and here is a free blank page asking to be filled--and that was what started it, back when I was a kid. The manifest destiny of a blank piece of paper. I filled it at 6 with a poem about ducks. (Was that prophetic?) A blank notebook followed at 8 and so I wrote a whole book. Ditto at 9 and 10 and the 10-year-old book called Cloudlanders got published in weekly installments in the Galesburg (Illinois) Post. It ran for four months, and only ended when the editor ran out of material and on the front page asked me to send more, pronto. I did--the last chapter! I couldn't stand the tension of a deadline and have refused most of them ever since.

Once in junior high and high school I was taught how to write, and since I was doing it all wrong, I quit writing. But at college, here was a class called Creative Writing! I embraced it, and have been writing ever since, with many hiatuses (hiati in Latin) for other things. Raising children, teaching, etc.

Julie's Secret Sloth was written in graduate school, with a genius of a teacher--Roy Cowden seldom spoke, just held his pencil over a problem spot and under my eyes the problem in my manuscript would miraculously make itself clear. I've never been able to do that--with my students, I wrote all over the margins, dialoging with them, but never used a red pencil or corrected spelling. (Well, "its and it's.") (Or grammar, except for "between you and I.")

You can find lists of all my books and descriptions, as well as The Cloudlanders on my website, jacqueline-jackson.com. Even after all these years, you can still purchase all the out-of-print editions on the used book market.

Moral of this tale: Never underestimate the power of a blank page!

Round Barn Volume 3 is here – Volume 4 is almost here!

Last year's Liberty promised the final Round Barn volumes to be out in 2014. We were wrong. Volume 3 made it, though unadvertised, and Volume 4 WILL be out in 2015. We'll have celebratory openings, send out notices, and trust you Liberty readers to spread the word, too.

This saga, as you know, has been a labor of love all my life; I've kept at it because it's been so participatory in its gathering, and too valuable not to share. The material is more pertinent than ever, in these days of Big Ag, Big Pharm, Big Oil, burgeoning population, and more and more strains on the environment and agricultural life.

Jacqueline Dougan Jackson



"After reading an inch into this almost 500 page book I crave my favorite dairy food every time I start reading again. Can you imagine having a close enough relationship with your dairy farmer that you can tell when the cows change their eating habits? Grace Croneis, wife of Beloit College's president in the early fifties, is heard to remark, 'Well, I can tell the Dougan cows are enjoying spring pasture!' I'm wondering about why and how the farm ended: guess that happens in Volume 4. Writing about this book makes me want to go slather a piece of zucchini bread with butter." --Goodreads, 2014

"As she finishes this third volume, Jackson has learned and relearned lessons about food, and more importantly, stewardship. She praises the rise of the small organic farm, the slow food movement, and the public's growing awareness of how food is produced. This story is more than a look back—it's a touchstone for a different kind of agriculture that could offer hope for the future—a future where we may again fall in love with our cows." Anna Marie Lux, Janesville Gazette

"Perhaps the fullest, most concrete history of the heyday of the American family dairy farm. It is a Tocqueville of the barn and pasture and big house, the milk route, the cornfield, and the making of an honorable living and a beautiful life. The Round Barn is a unique, unprecedented, and incomparable work, a definitive American work, a work of incalculable value to our history, our sense of ourselves as Americans, and perhaps our future." --Reginald Gibbons, Northwestern University

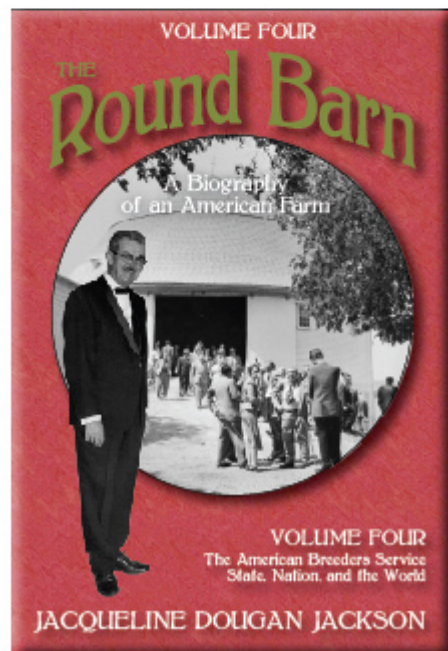
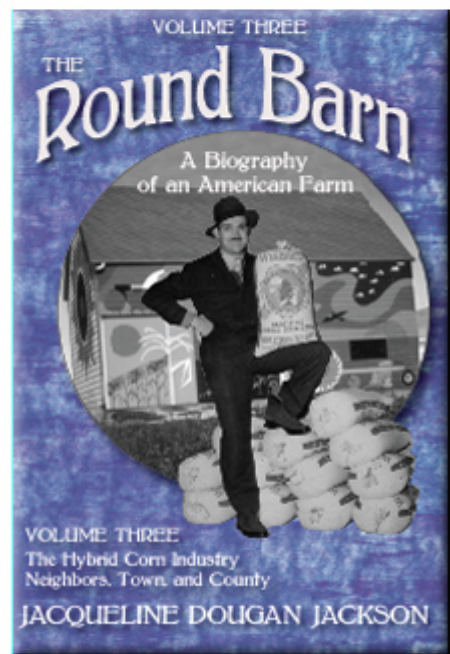
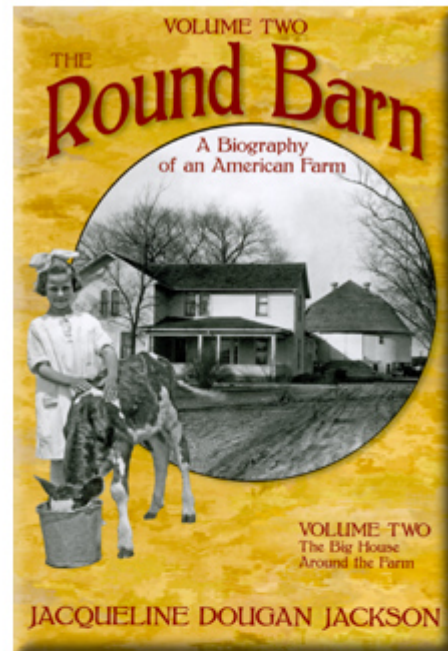
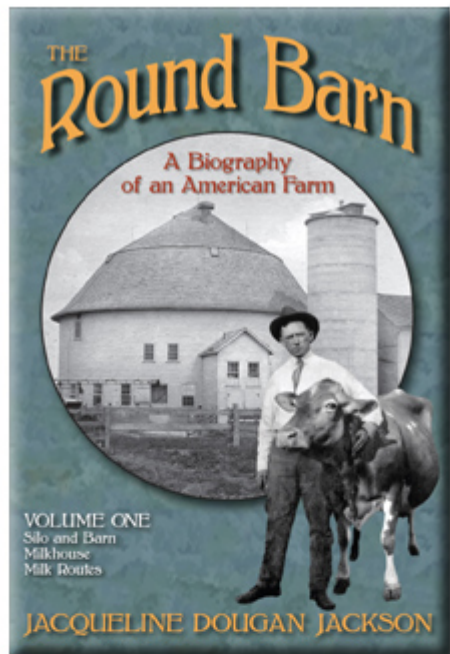
"Jackie Jackson has done it again. She's penned an epic, at once serene and exciting, lively and wise. It's a saga which you'd be well advised to read." --Tom McBride, Beloit College, Keefer Professor of Humanities, Emeritus.



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Ten wonderful years of poetry published in the Illinois Times