

A Sampler of Poetry & Prose



by **DOROTHY BODWELL**

A Sampler
Of Poetry and Prose

By Dorothy Bodwell

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DEDICATION

To my Norwegian Mother
Gertrude Bergeson Purrier,
Whose love of the printed word
Instilled in me the need to write

Special thanks to Grant Bodwell
who did the photography and scanning
For this book

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Mother and Me

Grief Deferred

I really didn't feel it
when my mother died.
Deep in my own ailments
I took my pills
kept appointments
busy with my own recovery.

I said all the right things
a good long life
didn't have to suffer
hope I can go like that

I congratulated myself
on taking it so well
went on writing
as if nothing had happened
organizing poem by poem
until they went to the printer.

Then with the book in my hands
my name big on the cover
it swept over me.
She who would have cared the most
was gone.

Soft Caress

Yellowed slip of paper
flutters from the pages
of a long unopened book.
Searching for consolation
a slim volume
fell into my hand
with its message from teh past.
she'd ordered
what she knew I'd like
and had them add a little note.
*A gift of appreciation
from your mother.*

Her Gift

A flat of violets
for me to plant
where I could see them
every spring
when she is gone.

Years have passed
they bloom again
without my help.

Purple petals
wafting fragrance
of remembrance.

Aunt Ollie

Long life that spanned a hundred years and one
is over and her tasks on earth are done.
Her legacy of strength through changing years
a gift from Minnesota pioneers.

A farmer's wife, they truly were a team
tilled the farm through prosperous times and lean.
She raised the garden, chickens, eggs to sell
set a sumptuous table, her role fulfilled.

Three daughters and a grandson blessed their home

new generations of this family sown.

As queen, she lived to see the clan evolve

and fed them, nursed them, taught them, loved them

all.

My Dad

He rolled his own
a tin of Union Leader
always in his pocket
ashes dribbling down
his bib overalls.

Whistling as he worked
he was a servant of the earth
a man born to farming.
Challenged by the weather.
he gloried in thunderstorms
feared hail
destroyer of crops
smoked tea leaves
when he was snowed in.

His horses were the power
that drove the plow and binder
--simple machinery
that coaxed a living
from the soil.

It was the end of an era
that gave way to tractors
racing through the fields
spewing fumes and noise
drowning his whistle
now silent.as he
merges with the soil.

Grandson

Strong arms
protect me
from surf
that tumbles
swirls
drags
away from shore.

Not long ago
the strength was mine
holding infant
sheltering growing boy
leading
hand in hand.
Now the tide has turned
he gives
and I receive.

At The Airport

We sit in silence
generation gap
a chasm
with
a slender bridge
that spans the years.

He'll go his way
and I'll go mine.
Relentless change
will force us
onto separate paths.
Tenuous link
will stretch
but never break.

Three Carolyn Court

The gate is opening to yesterday
and vacant house is ringing with the past,
I'll make this one last pilgrimage
to mark this epoch, say goodbye at last.

A baby's cry, a puppy's yip , faint echo
through the empty rooms. Soft voices, laughter
sounding through the years, dinner cooking
tables laden, dishes distant clatter.

Dear house, a comfort, haven from the storms
that pound and batter in the outside world.
Sheltering roof, strong walls are loving arms
enfolding, waiting as new lives unfurl.

Relentless change has brought us to this time
we must move on--another paradym.

Phillip Corbin Bodwell

January 27, 2002

New life
ejected, warmth left behind.
Strange cold world
of voices, lights, strong arms, nipples.

New life
for Eagle Scout
now father--acid test
On my honor, I'll do my best.

New life
changed them into
sandwich generation
grandparents, mature and wise.

New life
first great-grand child
nudges me up a notch
to venerable lady.

Sonnet for Charlene

Charlene deserves a sonnet, nothing less
to eulogize a life superbly led.
I'll write of challenge turned into success
minutia dealt with, family always fed.

She loved her home and her adopted town
whatever needed doing she was there.
Problems? A solution would be found
then dedicated all her strength and care.

I'd have to write of researching the homes
of pioneers, then shared in written word
of graveyard with its long-neglected bones
now honored so their stories could be heard.

Fourteen lines too short to tell all this
an ode perhaps or saga would express.

Old Friends

We chat
of daily things
remember other times
without this shadow
Hospice.

The Magic Garden

Her tiny patch of lawn
transformed
by caring hands
into a glowing garden
bright with pansies
stock
allysium
planted
in the darkest days
of winter.

It spurned
the icy fingers
of spring frost
bloomed in gratitude
for what she gave
a preview
of Elysian Fields beyond.

**Islands of the Blessed in Greek
mythology. Good souls were
sent there after death to dwell in
song and sunlight, in simple joy
among the flowers and meadows.*

Lefse Lady

Early mornings found her hard at work
her kitchen now a factory
where she manufactured lefse
soul food of Norwegians.

She mashed potatoes
mixed in flour, fat
shaped dough into balls
then rolled them paper thin
baked hundreds on a special grill.
Hearsay led buyers to her doorstep
cash in hand salivating at the hope
of enjoying once again
this reminder of their heritage.

Long ago in Norway's rocky land
thrifty housewives created something special
from what was there.
No holiday complete
without this buttered, sugared treat.

Now the lefse lady's gone
her griddle put away.
They'll have to find another source
to carry on connectedness
with Scandinavian lore.

Irma

We say goodbye, release her to new life
of peace and bliss in heaven's Elysian fields.
She leaves eight decades as his loving wife
our steadfast friend, this loss may not be healed.

Her skill was bringing order out of chaos
with papers filed correctly--letters sent.
A perfect fit for the career she chose
records on which patients' lives depend.

With scraps of fabric, new designs, her hands
created scores of quilts to warm the heart.
Loyal to her country and her native land
at church and lodge she always did her part.

Others will try to fill the empty space
but love bestowed can never be replaced.

Judicial Limerick

There once was a tral judge named Taylor
Wonderfully wise was he,
From high on the bench
He made criminals wince
San Quentin the best rmedy

TIM'S MOM

Transplanted
leaving all behind
dependent
on his younger strength
I'm standing
in his shadow
cast no shadow
of my own
Tim's mom
a paper doll
waiting to be put away.

My Journey

I've learned to walk, small steps
small world, clinging, dependent, holding
onto greater strength, forced to accept
my little place yet unfolding
day by day, resisting limits, infantile
restrictions soon outmoded.

I joined another--we yoked together
to make a whole, a harnessed team
to further nature's goals. While tethered
there was growth, devotion to the theme
of love, support, enhancing life
trotting through all kinds of weather.

I've given birth --they trusted to my care
and strength. Bone of our bone
blood of our blood, cubs nurtured in our lair.
Seeds of wisdom, mores sown
then ties were loosened--they now free for other
cycles of their own. Those childhood days are gone.

I've learned to walk alone, mandates are fulfilled
and now must play new role
Reinforced by all that's gone before, I've built
my base. Other travelers on this path enhanced
my days. Thrust to grow impels
Stasis time to understand.

Daily Tryst

Sentinel at my front gate
stands and waits
for mail incoming
mail outgoing.

Decades ago
we planted a brand-new-post
shining box atop
letters of our name in place.
Our wandering days were over.

Battered now
I note paint peeling
post is leaning
B of Bodwell gone.
We've aged together
surviving every kind of weather

Knit Two, Purl Two

New life beginning
tiny sweater
to warm his early days

Knit two, purl two
images
flash on the screen
tall buildings shattered
lives destroyed.

Knit two, purl two
if I could bring them back
I would.
I do what I can do
Knit two, purl two.

In a Crowded Room

Like hammers
beating on tin pans
cacophony around us
blurs, obscures
your voice.

I watch your lips
and hope to catch
the sounds
that link us
mind to mind
respond
to
what I hope
you said.

I lean closer
beg forgiveness
for the flaw
of aging ears
that don't pick up
the tops of words.

License to Drive

Omnipotent DMV, holder of the keys
mandates I appear to prove I'm competent.
Driver Handbook, dogeared now
underlines, margin notes
cues to store in aging, slippery mind
minutia that can grant me freedom.

Moving down the line from clerk to clerk
I chat them up, hoping they'll be kind.
Write a check, they verify statistics
I note ten pounds gone.

On to thumbprint, fumble, fail, need help.
Eye chart next, the left is blurred
make up something.
On to picture. No time to paste on smile
Will have to do.

Test sheet stretches on and on.
I plod through choices
that can send me walking.

Clerk taps into the computer, endlessly
Did I pass? She nods, I'm free to go.

Freeway

Disembodied lights
glow ahead, behind
flitting like fireflies
through black night
swept by pouring rain.

Thrust into the swarm
by poor lane choice
I fly in my shell
praying for respite
any exit.

Shingles!

Volcano erupting from the core
poured hot lava down my shoulder
then rushed through nerve pathways
blistering as it went.

For decades virus lurked in deepest recess
of my spine, waiting to explode
Muse runs for cover, hiding
'til upheaval passes.

A Sailing Sestina

A small escape from winter's gloomy days
we pack too much and head out on a cruise
to southern seas where cold is seldom known.
This break in hibernation should renew
expand our mundane boundaries as we sail
in luxury far beyond our usual fare.

We'd dreamed of lazy days --good books our fare
resting, relaxing through ten sunny days.
Was not to be--as soon as we set sail
ship's flyer beneath the door. The cruise
director had big plans--ensuring we'd renew
his way--this new cocoon. a world unknown.

Enclosed from all that we had known
we quickly grabbed abundance as our fare
--jumped into the maze--we would
revitalize in short decade of days.
Propelled by Maasdam's energetic crews
"Just sign your name" cashless makes a sale.

We felt the rocking, rolling as we sailed
chewed Bonine--good advice from those who'd known
the upset that would have wrecked our cruise.
The dining room with all its sumptuous fare
--a focal point as we revolved through nights and days
with music, dancing, laughter, classes to renew.

Short trips ashore opened us to new
dimensions. All too quickly we set sail
again--left behind street vendors for new days
of history, cultures heretofore unknown.
We tried to do it all, we'd paid our fare
--must save the rest for still another cruise.

Day ten--reluctant ending to the cruise.
We're forced to give up capsule and renew
forgotten lives again--our airline fare
connected us to mainland, not a sail.
We try to focus on the lives we'd known
and hope to keep the glow in coming days.

Dazed, we leave the crews we sailed with
renew the known, the ordinary fare
out of hibernation, new life ahead.

War and Peace

In far-off Serbia bombs are screaming down
We send our warriors there to force a peace
while gunshots blaze here in this quiet town.

Across our land we hear the church bells sound.
and pray that animosities will cease.
In far-off Serbia bombs are screaming down.

Victims look to us to heal their wounds
protect them, save them as they're pushed to flee
while gunshots blaze here in this quiet town.

Amid the pandemonium that surrounds
we search for any answers that will free.
In far-off Serbia bombs are screaming down.

The clamor heightened as the media expounds
and fills my mind with world's anxieties
while gunshots blaze here in this quiet town.

I'll turn away from experts so profound.
If there is peace it must begin with me
In far-off Serbia bombs are screaming down
while gunshots blaze here in this quiet town.

Chemo

Drip, drip, drip
into cancer victim's vein
enough to cure
not enough to kill.
In her recliner
she counts the hours
as nurses
with bright smiles
and soft footfalls
tend row on row
of monitors.

Pantoum

Life's boat leaves a trail
traveling through time
foamy, frothy gales
much ado behind.

Traveling through time
power pushes forward
much ado behind
visions glow ahead.

Power pushes forward
slicing through rough seas.
Visions glow ahead
impels the drives prestige
bright images foment.

Churning up the moment
splash ahead, splash behind
bright images foment
mingle in this point of time.

Splash ahead, splash behind
foamy, frothy gales
dissolve to nothingness
as life's boat leaves its trail.

Lament

When haze of autumn filters through the air
a heartfelt time, I mourn the time to come
I will be gone, no longer will be there.

Fall's turning leaves adrift in scarlet flare
a change of season, summer's heat withdrawn
when haze of autumn filters through the air.

Then someone else will feast on harvest fare
tomatoes, carrots, apples, peaches, plums
I will be gone, no longer will be there.

They'll laugh with glee, dance without a care
rejoicing in abundance, they'll respond
when haze of autumn filters through the air.

They'll bask in pleasure --fall we will not share
A poignant time. I know the day will come
when haze of autumn filters through the air
I will be gone, no longer will be there.

Another Spring

and winter's crust is melting into hope
of sunny days and all new life beginning.
Wind softens into breezes fresh with scope
and freedom from the web of winter's spinning.
So many springs have come throughout the years
each time I thrill to mustard-sprinkled hills
as chorus lines of almonds dance in tiers
in nature's wonderland of froth and frills.
I know that other springs are surely coming
new rainbows bending softly through the mist
with clover fields alive and insects humming
and tender rosebuds dewy, crystal kissed.

In midst of all, I mourn the time to come
a pang--this life will end and I'll be gone.

Milestone

I can't die young, that time is past
this birthday tells me so.
Now four-score years, I must admit
that eighty years is old.

I can't die young, I'll have to face
that youthfulness is gone.
They'll say she lived a good long life
it's time to move along.

I won't die young, turn back the clock
I'll die mature instead.
When that time comes, I'll take my leave
--now much to do ahead.

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First Prize, Humor Category
Ina Coolbrith Annual Contest, 2004

Picture Window

Hummingbirds swoop, sail
through morning air--playful tease
then sip the nectar.

Lily of the Nile
blue long-stemmed summer beauties
dancing in the breeze.

Spider plants flourish
in peat-moss hanging baskets
trail infant spiders
.

Summer to Fall

Naked ladies dance

pink leafless long-stemmed beauties

wave in August sun.

Long shadows creeping

on the grass, sun lower now

summer fading fast.

Woodbine turning red

against the fence, glow ablaze

announces fall is here.

Transitions

Numbing winter cold
branches stark against dark sky
brief blaze of sunset.

Life force deep within
resting, waiting for spring thaw
crocus peeks through snow.

Spring rain splashes down
awakening all nature
fresh green leaves unfurl.

January

Daylight inches in
January's grip loosens
hold on winter's thrall.

Raindrops splashing down
fill the puddles, lakes
to over flowing.

Leafless branches wait
for signal to awaken
hibernating buds.

February

**Sunshine and wind each
have their role to play in spring
quicken nature**

**Awakening life
still folded deep in buds, waiting
for opening cue.**

**Violets ignore
the frosty, chilly mornings.
Now their time to bloom**

Maria de Estrada

Woman roughneck caballero
joined her spouse
with Herman Cortes' expedition
into Aztec land.
No Virgin Mary, she
confounded Montezumans
galloping in full armor
brandishing
her sword beside the men.

They came from southern Spain
sixteenth century warriors
who paid well to join the fray.
From Cuba they invaded Mexico
fought their way through cities
defended bridges
she murderous
but called *great lady*.

They celebrated victory.
Men in quilted armor
she in full regalia
feasting, fandangoing
gala celebrating
Catholic triumph
God ordained.

Johanna of Naples

Lusty lady chose for spouse
Hungarian royal with a mighty nose
Above, below her reasoning
but she was wrong
and in a snarling snit
she had him strangled.

Banished now to family home in Avignon,
(incidentally papal base was there)
she used her wits and energy
to organize the local bawdy brothel
into a union promising proud membership
with red braid insignia as their badge.

They had strict house rules
under Catholic guidelines.
No birth control, abortions
health exams, quarantine when ill
or in a family way
with care for infants born to them.

The luxury bordello flourished
attracting ladies from all around the country side.
It caught the eye of Pope Clement VI
salivating buyer who paid a hefty price
absolving past transgressions
including murder of poor Andy.
Alas, she didn't ask for papal pardon
for her future sins.

The Abbey was the name
he gave the pleasure palace
Were girls then known as sisters, nuns?
We'll never know
but bishops got a special rate.

Margaret of Scandinavia

She melded Nordic nations into one.
although six hundred years ago
women couldn't rule.
She found new ways
to reach her goal
relentless as a river
flowing to the sea.

Danish Princess Margaret
married to Norwegian king
persuaded Denmark's Council
to name their son,
a five-year-old, as king.
She, the regent, ruled
behind the scenes
and used her wiles
to annex Norway to the realm.

A shadow fell when Olaf died.
Her nephew satisfied the need
for male to lead.
They made a team,
he did the social part
while Margaret did the governing.

Nearby Sweden, noting her command
pleaded to be part of it
then Finland came into the fold.
Not afraid to use her brains,
she used her skills
though not in name
labored day and night

to weld the countries into unity.
They called her *sovereign lady*
guardian but never king.

She lived to ninety nine
left a Scandinavia
peaceful, strong
to Eric
who let the union fall apart.

Snowshoe Thompson
1827-1876

Sierra mail man skied ninety miles
twice a month over snow more than
thirty feet in depth. Canadian snowshoes
much too slow, he made new skies
the runners ten feet long
upturned in the front.

He carried more than eighty pounds
letters, small items needed by those
marooned from fall to late in spring.
Three days going, two returning
eating only jerky, crackers, water scooped
from mountain streams, or snow
that melted in his mouth.

He'd gather boughs to make a bed
feet toward the fire, mail sack for a pillow.
When blizzards came, he dared not sleep
danced Norwegian folk tunes through the night
on any flat rock he could find.

Never lost, guided by trees, stones
and stars at night, he faced down wolves
pretending to be brave, kept going
straight ahead, ignoring staring eyes.

Norwegian poverty forced his family's
immigration to America when he was ten.
Their home was in Missouri
until the gold rush beckoned.
When he was twenty four, he drove a herd
of cows to California. Some survived
supported them while they tried their hands
at mining gold. Not for him.

Intrigued by Postal Service plea
for winter carrier, he applied
and was accepted with many warnings
of the dangers of the trip.
They said U.S. would pay
He thought the deal was sealed.

For twenty winters he carried letters,
strings for violins, strange ore for testing
from Virginia lode. Whatever settlers needed
he carried on his back. Fifty dollars in a season
was the most he ever earned from them.
They thought the government would pay,
it never did.

So Snowshoe staked a claim
near Markleville, married Agnes
they had a son. Good neighbor
at barn raisings, building saw mills,
digging irrigation ditches.
He enlisted in the Indian War
served in the Legislature
when he wasn't carrying mail.

First to ski across the mountains
first to carry silver ore
He died at forty nine, still poor
but truly hero of the west.

THOR HEYERDAHL

1914-2002

Stubborn Norwegian
born to wealth
a mama's boy
terrified of water
hated hunting, fishing.
Father made him take swimming lessons
on dry land.
Years later, he fell out of a fishing boat
tried the skills he'd learned
so long ago
It worked--no more fear of water.

A scientist at seven.
he collected specimens
labeled butterflies, sea shells
displayed them in his museum
followed in his mother's footsteps.

At fourteen
he met a hermit
Ole Bjerneby
spent a summer with him in poverty.
learned survival skills
broke the bond with his mother.

At Oslo University
he studied anthropology especially Polynesia
found a mate, Liv, who shared his passion
for living off the land.
They married when he was twenty two
moved to the Marquesas Islands north of Tahiti
built a house of braided bamboo
next to a retired cannibal
and lived on fish and plantains.

They were intrigued with legends
of the fair-haired, light skinned god
Kon Tiki
who had brought his people
to the islands from the east centuries before.
The natives showed them massive statues
of gods called tikis
which resembled statues
from pre-historic South American cultures.

Departing from accepted theories
that people from nearby Southeast Asia
originally settled Polynesia
Thor believed that
ancient settlers sailed
from the coast of Peru
in South America
more than 4,000 miles east
floated on balsa rafts
carried on currents
pushed by trade winds.

After two years, the couple knew
their island was no Eden.
Plagued by scorpion bites
boils and fear of elephantiasis
they fled back to Norway.
There they had two boys
then moved to British Columbia,
where he also found huge statues
researched his theory
that fair-haired tribes had traveled
from the Northwest to Peru
were overcome by the Incas
and fled across the ocean.
He published a paper
in International Science.

Skeptics scoffed
--said it was impossible
no boat could survive
the trip
on open ocean.

Called to duty in World War II
he served as liaison
between resistance fighters
and the government in exile.
By the end of the war,
he had a badly ailing marriage
and a dream to build a balsa raft and sail
from Peru to Polynesia.
He'd prove his migration theories.

Finances first, he found a backer
then convinced the United States War Department
to furnish supplies and equipment
in return for testing.
A rubber dinghy promised
by a member of the Explorers Club.
Short-wave radios were supplied.
Radio Amateur League of America
would listen in for reports from the craft.
Experienced resistance adventurers
made up the crew
of five Norwegians and one Swede
plus one Spanish speaking parrot.

Now to Peru for government approval
to build the raft in their boatyard.
Research into ancient writings
specified twelve balsa logs forty feet in length
found only in steamy Ecuadorian jungles.
The trees were felled
and floated down the river to the coast.

Logs lashed together using only ropes
were topped with a bamboo deck.
An eight by fourteen cabin was erected
with a roof of slats--leaves still on
topped by an orange square sail
--faithful copy of ancient vessels.
christened Kon Tiki

Weather window tight, they departed just in time
flying flags of countries supporting them.
Four thousand miles of ocean ahead
a thousand fathoms deep
afloat on the Humbolt current
pushed by eastern tradewinds
and guided only by the steering oar.
Water green and cold everywhere about
white crests groping in their direction
masses of water poured over them
and disappeared between the logs.
They'd travel fifty five to sixty miles a day
for more than a hundred days
before they came to land..
They took turns on watch
lashing themselves to the raft.

When seas were calm
each man had his area of expertise
the cook in charge of food
using wartime rations
supplemented by abundant fish
that landed on the deck
The radio man kept in touch with the faraway world.
and immediate surroundings
were explored in the dinghy.
They kept painstaking logs to document the trip
The parrot screamed epithets first in Spanish
then turning to Norwegian before he fell overboard.

Finally land was sighted, islands with coral reefs
that threatened to keep them on the sea.
A desperate struggle to survive.
Natives helped them through the shoals
Kon Tiki crashed against the rocks.

Triumphant journey back
to present President Truman
with the U.S. Flag
and then to write the book
describing their adventure.
33,000 copies sold
but still the skeptics wouldn't believe it could be done

Thor spent the remainder of his life
testing migration theories.
When he was diagnosed with cancer
he refused all treatment
stubborn to the end.

Otto Daerwitz -1864-1947

He lived on water almost all his life
from cabin boy to master of the ship.
A single soul--he never had a wife
Slavic sailor--Otto Daerwitz

At thirty-five, he helped design new home.
The Forester and he would sail far seas.
Four-masted schooner with its flags high flown,
transported lumber, part of larger fleet..

His twelve-man crew made up his family.
He worked them hard. they scrubbed and painted, oiled
and scraped the masts, eating well but frugally.
He rationed food--each man would get his dole.

Their meals enriched by pigs and hens aboard;
a pound of butter, half a pound of jam
their weekly portion served with days-old bread.
When days work was done, they played guitars and sang.

When sailing days were past, he chose to stay
aboard the Forester, bought his partner's shares.
He moved to mud flats in Carquinez Straits,
Martinez home to lonely wayfarer.

A quiet, pleasant solitary man,
Captain had to know friends well
before he dropped reserve. Shy with women
he opened up when there were tales to tell.

Retirement days were spent in maintenance
caulking, oiling, painting now his chore.
His faithful watch dogs guarding pier's entrance.
became his family, enhanced by friends ashore.

A dozen years went by, he was content
With Forester his mate, he lived to eighty three.
Died in his chart room, faithful to the end
to schooner and his passion for the sea.

Medieval Aud

A kinder, gentler Viking chose
to flee instead of fight
when Thorstein, only son, was killed
by Scots that fatal night.

Many years before she'd fled
when wedded to a king
then settled in New Hebrides
for a decade's peaceful reign.

Now beloved son was gone
deep-grief--she couldn't stay
so built a ship to carry her
to islands far away.

She loaded it with treasures
followers and kin
settled in the Orkneys
but islands penned her in.

Three hundred sea-sick miles away
Iceland lured her on.
She'd join her brothers in new land
so out to sea again.

Disaster struck at water's edge
aground on hidden reef
they salvaged all that they could save
while battling the surf.

Alas, her family didn't want her
or her ragamuffin clan
she leased a boat and filled it full
and set to sea again.

She cruised the rugged Iceland coast
alert for choicest land
then built a fire to stake her claim
each inlet had her brand.

She meted out the parcels
to each and everyone
the grandkids, friends, and slaves a share
all finally had a home.

She got the last ones settled down
and every place was blessed
all duties done, she took her leave
to her eternal rest.

The Keepers

Isle Royal Lighthouse perched on rocks
in moody Lake Superiors's depths
a sailor's landmark, flashing light
warned of danger, hidden cliffs.

Island battered by huge storms
that pounded day and night
washed over beacon, giant waves
over sixty feet in height.

The guardian of the warning light
by name was John Malone.
He labored long and faithfully
keeping the flame aglow.

Not lonely, Julia shared his life
made a home on barren reef.
Twelve children born, a family now
in sunny times and bleak.

They scratched a living, hunting birds
and fishing in the sea.
They raised a garden, kept a cow
ate gull eggs for a treat.

Shipwrecks haunted coastal shores
attracted by the beam.
Debris was scattered, crashed on land
a devastating scene.

Saint Joan of Arc

The flames leaped high around her slender frame
for loss of Paris, she shouldered all the blame
in throes of death, she still would not recant
her mandate straight from God, was adamant
that voices told her she must free Orleans.
At just thirteen, unlettered, without means
she bravely started siege of France's King
promising revival victory would bring.
Give her an army of four thousand men
and she would rout the British from the land.
She got her way with Charles, that battle won.
King crowned at Rheims--she'd earned reknown.
Then off to Paris, no army could prevail
against her power--she simply could not fail.
But fail she did, giving up at last
from heroine to now despised outcast.
Tried by the Catholic Church for blasphemy
not guilty on all counts her only plea.
Abandoned by the king to burning at the stake
when flames rose high, she died for honor's sake
on pyre reduced to ashes--heart intact
beyond the fire, now beyond attack.

The Forester

A phantom schooner broods at water's edge
and dreams of glory days long in the past.
Proud lumber vessel she was said to have
traversed far seas, flags blowing from four masts.

The skipper, Otto Daerwitz, came aboard
the first day that she sailed and shared her life.
For fifty years, all oceans were explored
transporting lumber, trading merchandise.

Aboard, a mini barnyard fed men well.
Pigs and chickens added to the fare,
enhanced the codfish and potato meals
the salty cook would dutifully prepare.

The twelve-man crew was busy every day
painting, scrubbing, keeping barnyard clean.
They came and went but Daerwitz would stay
content to live in comfortable routine.

Her days were numbered, steamships took her place.
Too soon for graveyard, Forester found a niche
protecting Bridge's central piers --Carquinez
Strait now spanned, her turn to serve this hitch.

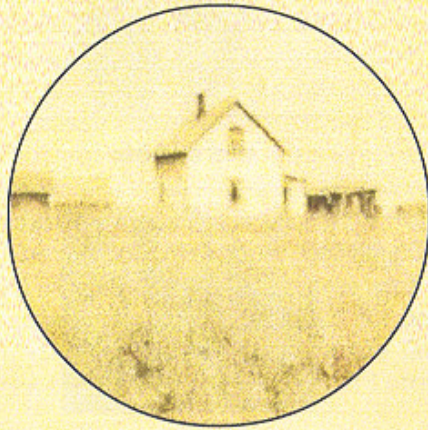
Martinez mud flats finally was her berth.
They docked near Granger's Wharf and settled down
contented time reflecting on his worth
--stories told to folks around the town.

At eighty five he died aboard his boat.
New owner came, Fitzgerald settled in.
Though not a sailor, this was his abode
a ninety dollar home, security within.

Masts, rigging, deck gear, other artifacts
transported to museums, were kept safe
from vandals, curious visitors ransacks
--treasures guarded in a stable place.

There came a day when fire swept through the ship
reduced the vessel to a smoldering wreck
--a vicious ending and a sad postscript
to seven decades land and oceans trek.

What I Remember





Dad and Me



Bud and Me



The Stone Boat

A TIME OF TRANSITION

When I was born in 1922, the "great war to end all wars and make the world safe for democracy" was over with the peace treaty finally signed the year before. President Wilson's dream of a League of Nations had been soundly smashed. Republican Warren Harding of Ohio had been elected president, not for his presidential capabilities but was a figurehead that the seasoned politicians could control. Warren Harding, who in many ways was an average American, had stated that America's greatest need was healing not heroics, normalcy and restoration rather than revolution. But what was normal? The strains and tensions of the war had blurred the former standards of what was normal and good. The upheaval of the draft snatching thousands of men and women from their homes and sending them to battlefields in Europe could not be erased. "How can you keep them down on the farm after they've seen Parris?" was a saying that I often heard my Dad quote.

Even then the seeds for World War II were being sown. Adolf Hitler was leading over ten thousand Bavarian Fascists. Benito Mussolini had rallied the Italians who were dissatisfied with their victorious Allies and what they received in the peace settlement. He founded the first "fasci" or political group and adopted a program of passionate nationalism. He became so powerful that in October of 1922, King Emmanuel surrendered his throne and called Mussolini to head the government. He used any means to accomplish his ends, murder, exile, and prison camps were common punishments for any who disagreed with his policies.

In England, Lloyd George was Prime Minister with Winston Churchill as Colonial Secretary. Churchill helped to

establish the state of Iraq, negotiated the difficult Anglo-Irish treaty, and drafted title deeds for the Palestine mandate.

In the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt had run for Vice President on the Democratic ticket against Harding. In the summer of 1921, he suffered the attack of polio that left him physically but not mentally crippled. Even with his disability, in 1922 he was Chairman of the American Construction Council and was instrumental in putting a moratorium on all speculative building for several months.

Hitler, Mussolini, Churchill, and Roosevelt were to have a profound effect on my life. Their voices came over the radio during the thirties clouding my school days with the threat of immanent war.

The explosive Hitler spat out his venom from across the Atlantic. Churchill's clipped logic and Roosevelt's "Fireside Chats" are never-to-be-forgotten voices from the past.

1922 was a time of prosperity. Bankers said that times were good. The farmers cried about poor crops and unemployment. Immigration laws were so tight that there was a labor shortage. Steel mills were forced to use a 12-hour day which created a great uproar. There was much labor unrest with John L. Lewis as President of the United Mine Workers leading 550,000 coal miners out on strike. At the same time, 1,200,000 railroad men were promoting a strike that affected half their number.

Over 300,000 motor cars were produced that year with the Ford Motor Company instituting the first installment plan only in reverse. They made it possible to own a Model T Ford by making a deposit of \$5 and paying monthly until the car was paid for and taken home.

The availability of cars was especially significant for those of us who lived in the farm country. We were no longer limited to using horses for transportation and could

to go to church, town and visiting by Model T. Roads that were still little more than dirt trails only usable in good weather but it was a step forward.

The first commercial airline from New York to Chicago was planned in 1922 using a rigid dirigible fueled with helium. It would carry 50 passengers and leave New York at 6 in the morning and arrive early the next morning with provision for passengers to sleep en-route. Mail was then being transported by air but planes were handicapped by having to fly only during the day. To solve this problem, giant sweeping lights or aerial beacons were placed in Chicago, Iowa City, North Platte and Cheyenne with flares in between to guide the planes through the night.

Radio was in its infancy with the first broadcasting of a popular event being the election returns of the Harding-Cox presidential election by Station KDKA in Pittsburgh, radio station WEAP in New York broadcast the first commercially sponsored program.

Although motion pictures were considered a cheap form of entertainment at first, by 1922 they were well established. Charlie Chaplin, Pola Negri, Jackie Cooper, Ben Turpin, Marion Davies, Rin Tin Tin, Lillian Gish, Mary Pickford, Lon Chaney, Gloria Swanson, Buster Keaton, and William S. Hart were movie stars that continued to shine all through the 20's and 30's. In the early years, movie theaters were only available to the city dwellers but they branched out to small town making "going to the show" the high point of the week. Movies brought not only entertainment but the whole outside world into our daily lives--new styles, new language, new way of thinking. Thomas Edison said that in 20 years children would be taught through movies, not books. I'm glad he was wrong.

Time magazine was not to be published until 1923. Robert Frost was "Poet in Residence" at Ann Arbor, Michigan feuding with Carl Sandburg. Amy Lowell and Louis Untermeyer were well-known poets in this dec-

ade of the beginning of contemporary literature.

In the field of health and medicine, tuberculosis was the leading killer claiming 90,452 lives that year. Cancer was next with 80,938. Influenza, pneumonia, heart and kidney diseases took their toll. There were no "miracle drugs" to combat diseases. Dr. Alexis Carrel discovered white cells in the blood (leukocytes) that year. Scopoline was discovered and used as a drug to relieve pain and also used as a truth serum. Dr. Serge Varnoff, a Russian surgeon in Paris, was doing gland transplants for rejuvenation. We are still searching for the "fountain of youth." Dr. Henry Sheridan of Chicago reconstructed Fanny Brice's nose with plastic surgery and was dubbed a "nose quack" and chased out of Chicago. Birth control was a hot issue even then with the United States and Japan being the only countries that placed absolute restrictions on the dissemination of information. It was feared that having access to this kind of knowledge would lead to widespread immorality.

While these events were taking place far from my birthplace in Saskatchewan, Canada on June 24th, 1922 in a farmhouse not far from the Saskatchewan River, they had a great influence on how I would live my life. The prosperity of the early twenties had in it the seeds of the great depression which was only cured by the false prosperity of World War II. The beginnings of World War II were already fermenting in Europe and would explode in 1941 when I was starting my own life as an adult. The communication, transportation, and medical advances have given me choices and opportunities that would have been impossible had I been born a century earlier.

EARLIEST DAYS

We were lost in the wheatfield! I was only three years old but had taken my twenty-month old brother, Buddy, by the hand and followed our dad out to the pasture at milking time. We knew we wouldn't get to go along if he saw us so we kept out of sight by walking along the edge of the field. Suddenly, we were surrounded by the ripe wheat stalks that loomed high over our heads. Every way we turned there was more and more wheat. We were badly frightened and in our panic beat at the stalks frantically trying to find a way out; fortunately, my dad happened to glance over at the field and saw the wheat heads moving and guessed what was happening. What a welcome sight it was to see his tall figure striding through the grain!

My mother remembers: "I looked out of the window and here he came walking home from the pasture with one of you on each shoulder and carrying a pail of milk in each hand."

We were living on a wheat farm in Saskatchewan, Canada owned by a bachelor farmer, Osborne Holen, where my dad was the "hired man" and my mother the "hired girl." That summer our little sister, Joyce, was born so fast that there was no time to get the doctor so my dad had to take his place. In all the confusion, we were banished from the house with no explanation of what was going on. Buddy and I were standing outside of the house trying to peek through the window. Of course, we were too short to see anything but we sensed that whatever was happening was pretty important. I was only three but I think that was when I assumed the role of "little mother" and took on things that were beyond me. My mother remembers the

worry she had about the many dangers there were for toddlers on the farm especially now that she had a new baby, However, we found farm a wonderful, exciting place to explore.

We were especially intrigued by the big red barn with a huge hay mow where nine horses had their stalls. King, Prince, Big Pete, Little Pete, Barney, June, Nancy, Vic and Jack lived in the barn during the summer when they weren' t working in the field. In the fall they were turned out to graze. Going out to the barn was a thrilling adventure when our parents took us to see the horses munching hay in their managers and switching their tails. We were kept safely back from the heels that could be dangerous. We got to climb up the twenty-foot stairway to the hay mow where we loved to peer down through the opening over each manger and watch the horses heads as they chewed their hay.

There came a day when we ran out of things to do. Our mother was busy with the baby and our dad was out in the field. There was no one to take us out to the barn so I took Buddy by the hand and away we went. The horses were all out in the field so there was nothing to see on the ground floor. Wanting to carry on our adventure, we clambered up the stairs to the haymow and played in the hay. When we tired of that, we explored around and discovered the big open door where hay was loaded in. We were standing at the edge looking out at the countryside when our mother missed us. She was horrified when she saw us standing there.

"I left the baby in the house and ran out to the barn," she told me in describing the incident. "I was afraid to startle you so I quietly crept up the stairway and talked you away from the edge. I was so thankful that you were safe that I couldn' t scold you. I just made you promise that you would never do that again."

During the growing season, the farm work revolved around the crops. While most of the work was handled by Mr. Holen and my dad, when harvest time came a threshing crew took over. Then we were in a constant fever of excitement at the noise of the machinery, the smell of new straw, and all of the horses and wagons going back and forth. It would all begin with the "whoop, whoop, whoop" of the steam engine's whistle in the distance and then as we watched from the safety of the house, the chuffing and chugging steam engine, came into view pulling the threshing machine. The machinery was then set up in the barn yard, with a long belt bringing power from the steam engine. The men driving bundle wagons went out into the wheat fields, came back with their loads and pitched the bundles into the hopper. There a conveyor belt moved the bundles through the machine where the wheat kernels were separated from the straw. The grain came out through a spout into the wagon and the straw flew out through the blower. The straw pile got higher and higher and the smell of straw and smoke pervaded everything. A cook car and a bunk car traveled with the crew and was parked near enough to the house so we could go back and forth on our own. The cook's kitchen was filled with aromas of cookies baking, fat loaves of bread, big roasts. His face was red from the heat of the stove; he mopped his face with his sleeve as he worked but busy as he was, he always had a broad smile and cookies for us.

Three years before that on June 24, 1922, I was born on my great uncle and aunt's farm near Macrorie, about sixty miles south of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. My dad had served in the army during World War 1 in France and Germany and still wasn't ready to settle down in Minnesota so my parents left their family and friends and all that was familiar to build a new life in Canada. They took the long train ride to Saskatchewan

where they lived at first with my mother's aunt and uncle, John and Anna Farden. Anna, her sister, Gunda, and her two brothers, Knute and Jake, had immigrated from Norway and farmed in that wide-open country near the South Saskatchewan River that dominated the area. My mother relates:

"The river had steep rocky banks covered with small scrubby hardwoods. There were sand bars in the river and it was treacherous. Many people drowned in its dark swirling waters. When the 'freshet' was on in the spring, the river was close to a mile wide."

The fall after I was born we needed a home of our own so we moved to the "Storbo Place," about a mile and half from the town of Braaten. My mother recalls:

"The house was really a shack. The walls were so thin that the wind went right through them. In the wintertime the temperature could go to forty below. Many times the water in the wash basin would be frozen solid in the morning." She further relates, "I wrapped you up in your dad's sheepskin coat to keep you warm. The coyotes howled at night and I was so scared when we were home alone that we went to bed at seven o'clock. That didn't help much because we were awake at three." During that time, my dad was a member of a threshing crew and worked on neighboring farms so my mother and I lived alone much of the time.

The next year, we moved to the Henry Cole farm about seven miles north of Macrorie where my dad worked on a nearby farm. There Buddy was born. My mother describes that time: "There wasn't a well there so every day, Dad would hitch our white-faced horse to the "stone boat" and bring back cans of water." I have a snapshot of my dad and me on the stone boat, which was simply a small platform with runners instead of wheels.

It was a big improvement when we moved to Mr. Holen' s farm near Ardath. My mother remembers, "He had a nice house and barn we and we were comfortable there even though we worked hard." Although we lived about twenty miles from the Fardens, we still got together with them for special occasions. I was in awe of the Norwegian uncles, Knute and Jake, but delighted with the Farden' s little girls, Randi, four, and Gertude, six years old. I was only three and Gertrude seemed incredibly tall. I wondered if I would ever be that big!

We stayed in Canada until I was three and a half years old. My parents missed their families back in Minnesota; the future didn' t look very bright in Canada. My dad' s father died that summer really emphasizing the distance separating them from their old home in Minnesota. That November they packed us up and we got on the train in Conquest for the long ride to Winnipeg. The huffing and puffing of the train' s engine, the clatter of all those cars was really scary for little kids from the farm. We were very shy and bashful and clung together for the first few hours but gradually we responded to friendly people on the train. I remember a real feeling of warmth as we played and got acquainted. When we got to Winnipeg, we had to stay overnight in a hotel and then catch another train the next morning going south to Twin Valley, Minnesota. I remember the two big trunks and a leather valise that held everything we owned. My mother in looking back on that trip said: "Every time the train stopped, the heat went off so it got really cold, I bundled Joyce up so warm that her face was red as a beet! What a time I had keeping all of you comfortable on that long trip."

Even though I only lived in Canada a short time, the freedom of the open spaces left a lasting impression on me.. When I went back through that country many years later, I had a feeling of coming home.

Scarlet Fever

It was Christmas Day, 1925 in that farmhouse in northern Minnesota. Snow was deep and the windows were heavily coated with patterns of frost. The big heater roared day and night to keep out the bitter winter cold. There was a Christmas tree but it wasn't in the large dining room as it had been on other Christmases but in the downstairs bedroom adjacent where Buddy and I were sick with scarlet fever.

We had just arrived from Canada a few weeks before. It was a happy reunion for my parents but frightening for me to have all those grown-up uncles and aunts laughing and teasing. They didn't realize how shy we were. We had never known anything but our own little family. I remember taking Buddy and hiding under the kitchen table where we could peek out at the family around the edges of the tablecloth.

What was to be a stay of only a few days turned into almost a whole winter when scarlet fever swept through the family. It all began when we visited my dad's sister and two little girls, Dodo and Bub. Dodo was sick but even so let me play with her doll and I picked up the germs. Grandma Purrier's bedroom became a sick room with the never-to-be forgotten scarlet fever smell pervading everything. Grandma was deathly afraid of drafts and chills under the best conditions; now we were tucked under many woolen quilts that she pieced together from old coats. The fire in the stove couldn't match the fire in my throat and body. The room was a red haze. The Christmas tree glimmered in the corner and those who were well enough tried to encourage me to play with my present, a little wind-up rooster that walked through the bedclothes. In my half-delirious state, it was a threatening monster and I cried to have it taken away.

The situation was frightening enough to have Dr. Bothne drive his horses and cutter out from Ulen, about eight miles away. I had never seen a doctor before but his portly white-haired presence brought reassurance that all would be well. He opened up his black bag and got out what he called “powders.” My mother mixed it with jelly but even then it was bitter.

I felt I was a big girl but Buddy was still a baby who needed to be rocked. He lost his place when our little sister was born that summer and now when he was so sick, could only be comforted by my dad rocking him hour after hour. Memories of seeing them at the foot of the bed rocking, rocking, rocking--my dad dozing off and slowing down in weariness and Buddy’s little voice saying, “Bock Buddy” are with me still.

We were quarantined for weeks as the bug went through the whole family. No one was allowed to come into the house and no one could leave. The farm was self-sufficient but some supplies had to come from town. An order was placed by phone to the grocery store and picked up by whoever of the uncles was well enough to drive the team and sled. Our isolation was complete but to me, a whole new world opened up. The weeks of illness and being cared for expanded my life to include a whole new family.

About the Author



Dorothy Bodwell, retired Contra Costa County employee, graduate of Diablo Valley College and John F Kennedy University, was born in Saskatchewan, Canada, grew up in Minnesota, and has lived in Martinez since 1947. She has a son and a daughter, five grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

She started writing poetry while enrolled in creative writing classes at John F. Kennedy University and published *A Sampler of Poetry* in 1998, followed by her autobiography *What I Remember* in 2001. She is a member of the Ina Coolbrith Poetry Circle and Crystal Writers Poetry Workshop and has won numerous prizes in poetry competitions.