

A watercolor illustration of a landscape, framed within a large, hand-drawn oval border. The scene depicts a river or stream flowing under a simple wooden bridge. On the left bank, a large, gnarled tree trunk stands prominently, with its roots extending into the water. A path of red flowers leads from the foreground towards the bridge. The right bank is covered in green grass and small trees. In the background, more trees and a hazy sky are visible. The entire illustration is set against a textured, light brown background.

**THE
LOW WATER
BRIDGE**

ALEX and Nora lived on a farm in a little valley in South west Virginia. He had inherited the family homestead from his grandmother. At the bottom of the hill behind the house ran a creek so cold and clear, the minnows swimming on the bottom were easily visible. The boundary of the farm lay just beyond the creek, which provided water for the live-stock. A fence between the pasture and the main field kept the cattle from the crops. To the west of the house was a large barn and other out buildings, surrounded by a fence as well. A large garden, well, and cellar house were behind the house. Although a few homes had indoor plumbing, a path beneath a grape arbor led to the outhouse in this instance. A dusty field road served as a driveway which led to the main road into the nearest town, several miles distant. A fence of hand cut pickets and a rustic arched gate defined the front yard. On the inside perimeter, with no particular attention given to placement by the generations who planted them, grew ancient shrubs and perennials. Among these were fragrant white and purple lilacs, a rose of sharon, bridal wreath, a Persian yellow rose, and a scattering of orange day lilies that would continue to thrive long after the house had gone. A little orchard a short distance from the house boasted Kieffer pears, damson plums, Hale Haven peaches and apples; a westfield Seek no Further, Cox's Newtown Pippin, a Hughes Crabapple and a Spitzenberg. Apples were cored and sliced, laid out on newspapers on the porch roof to dry, then strung on twine and hung in the attic along with green beans. Like all farm families they were mostly self sufficient, requiring few items.

*Grapes ripened and fell,
Purpling the walk beneath the
arbor, and also bare feet —*

from the store. Cream, eggs and butter, as well as garden produce in season, and wild blackberries were exchanged for necessities such as sugar, salt, kerosene, etc. Soap was made at home, but grain was no longer taken to the mill for meal and flour. Spinning and weaving were labors of the past, so wool was sold by weight. Nora would sometimes select colorful feed sacks for making aprons, or if more than one of the same pattern would be available, a dress.

Alex and Nora rarely left home, and when a need presented itself, the little cross roads store a short distance away usually served the purpose. However, once in a while, usually on a Saturday evening, weather permitting, they would make the longer trip to the nearest town, between planting and harvest. During those times, not a moment was spared from around the clock labor. In addition to the opportunity to catch up on the news from the sparse number of distant neighbors, there was the promise of the summer's "free show," a movie sponsored by local merchants. This entertainment served as an incentive to keep customers in town longer, and perhaps buy more merchandise. Children especially were eager to spend their pennies at the candy counter. The main street was roped off, a movie screen set up in the center, and for the next couple of hours, allowing for the inevitable film breakage and other glitches, a work weary audience, seated on their apple crates and quilts, left behind the daily toil and eternal battle with the elements. The show was, by design, usually a "cliff hanger," insuring a return the following week.



for the next showing of a space adventure with Buster Crabbe, or Richard Dix in a fast moving western with lots of gun play, a pretty schoolmarm and handsome hero. These as well as church on Sunday, a quilting bee, or an occasional pie supper at the country school comprised the social life of the quite thinly populated farm community, except for the one event of the year that nothing short of a death in the family, a compound fracture or a quarantine could keep one from attending, the rural equivalent of a first class Broadway show.

The Toby Show came to town and set up a tent on the same vacant lot each summer. A family troupe of travelling vaudevillians; Toby and Susie Haverstick, their son Rolland, his wife, Peggy, and an extra or two that differed from year to year entertained in hamlets and villages along their route.

Girls were enthralled with the tall handsome (if a bit bowlegged) Rolland, the Magician. Dressed in his crimson lined cape and top hat, his tricks amazed the audience. Peggy, a pretty slim blonde played the accordion and sang, appreciated by the males in attendance.

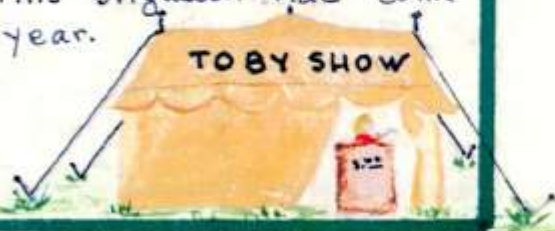
The "Meller Drammer" featured all four with an extra villain. Toby, in red wig and clown makeup, and baggy trousers, and Susie in a colorful polka dot ruffled dress and striped stockings portrayed much the same characters each year, involved in a familiar plot. Toby would solve the mystery with the discovery of the murder weapon. He would pick up the pistol and declare "The chamber's empty, the barrel's hot. This is the gun that fired the shot!"

During intermission the lights would come on and one of the performers would announce "We will pass among you with boxes of delicious taffy, each box guaranteed to contain a valuable prize, perhaps one of these." (holding up a string of 'pearls' or a gold colored watch. The asking price was cheerfully exchanged for the Cracker Jack type trinkets hidden amidst jaw punishing morsels, their value never questioned.

Rolland would place a large masonite panel on an easel, and proceed to paint an upside down landscape in bright primary colored enamels. With a fanfare, he would turn it right side up, to the applause of the gaping onlookers. A drawing at the end of the show awarded this gaudy work of art to the "lucky" ticket stub holder.

With his marvelous deep voice, Rolland recited such epics as Casey at the Bat, Dangerous Dan McArew and The Face on the Bar Room Floor.

Sometimes as late as 10: P.M. the show ended. The weary public returned to their horse drawn vehicles or family jalopies, while some started the long walk home. — The next days chores began again. By morning the lot showed few signs that anything out of the ordinary had taken place. A few candy wrappers, trampled grass left by benches and work shoes, as well as ill tempered ponies corralled behind the tent for twenty five cent 'kio rides' around the enclosure. — This "Brigadoon" had come and gone for another long year.



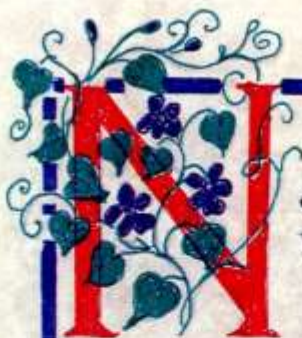
TICKETS

The every day confrontation with the elements consumed the families of the land. They met the day at sunrise or before, depending on the task at hand, and labored long into the night at planting and harvest time. Animals required attention each morning and evening. To the bone weary, days end and rest were welcomed with the sheer satisfaction of work well done.

Alex and Nora were both descendants of the highlanders who settled the mountainous region beyond the eastern colonies. These remarkable individuals were encouraged to take on the rugged wilderness with its wild beasts, punishing terrain and constant attacks and abductions of women and children by Indians. They met the challenge admirably. Near the ancestral home was a well tended cemetery with tombstones marking the burials of generations from those first to cross the mountains, through the Revolutionary, Civil and World War I up to the present day nineteen thirties.

Having grown up in this same neighborhood, both attending the little one room school through the eighth grade, then the high school in the adjoining town, they married in the country church which had always been apart of their lives. Alex's parents had both died in the flu epidemic of 1917. He lived with his grand parents, helping on the farm until his grandfather died, then assumed full responsibility from his grandmother. He was twenty one when they married. Nora was nineteen.





Nora and Alex had been married for ten years. They were devoted to one another, and had suffered a great loss in years past. Having finally accepted and reconciled with their tragic situation, they made the best of things and moved on in life.

One particular summer day they returned from a trip to the Crossroads store, scattering poultry as they drove up to the front gate on the dusty driveway. Their border collie, Jock, was playing in the yard with four half grown pups, mirror images of himself. Their pickup had met a gaunt mama dog with nipples dragging the ground as she sped away. The scenario was obvious. Jock's offspring had been unceremoniously delivered to him by an exhausted mother. "I've never seen that before" exclaimed Alex. "Well old fella, looks like your chickens come home to roost, so to speak - that'll larn ya!"

He took the gunny sack containing a block of ice through the house to the ice box on the back porch, dripping all the way. "You could have gone 'round the back way" shouted Nora. The regular ice delivery man wasn't due for a couple of days, and they were almost out, in the hot weather. Butter was kept cold in a pottery crock with a bail hanging in the well, but some items needed the ice box. A square sign of card board was displayed in the front window indicating the size block needed in case no one was home on ice day. The back door was left unlocked for the deliveryman. Town deliveries were closely followed by barefoot children. At every stop, a block

reserved for just this purpose at the back of the truck, was struck with an ice pick and small chunks were handed to the giggling little beggars."

Following Alex into the house, side stepping the puddles on the way to the kitchen Nora set her basket on the table and proceeded to put away the groceries she had received in trade for her fresh eggs and heavy cream. It was quite late in the afternoon, and Alex had gone to do the evening chores. Nora heated two iron skillets on the old cookstove. Adding bacon grease, she fried sliced potatoes with onions, pork chops, and fixed wilted lettuce with vinegar, sugar and crisp bacon. The mouth watering aroma met Alex as he reached the back screen door. The sun was slowly retreating behind the fence row, throwing fiery orange fingers of light through the leafy branches. Supper was enjoyed by the light of a kerosene lamp on a harvest table covered in a red and white checked oil cloth.

Nora cleared the table, washed the dishes, fed the scraps to Jock and his newly acquired family, removed her apron and hung it on a hook behind the door. Then she joined Alex on the porch swing. As if on cue, the katydids and whippoorwills began their even song, their chorus lasting well past bedtime, stopping as abruptly as it began.

It was barely dark when a terrified rabbit, closely followed by an equally terrified fox, (overtaking the rabbit, but passing it) sped by the house. Other animals followed. Nora stepped off the side of the porch to see what had frightened them. The stampede came from the direction of the creek behind the barn. She saw lights coming down the mountain across the creek, and



heard sputtering and loud banging. Reaching the bank, it crossed the low water bridge with its horn blaring non stop, striking fear into all in its path. Coming to rest in the field, knocking down several rows of corn stalks, was an ancient truck overflowing with hillfolks. Nora called to Alex and together they slowly approached the truck load of disheveled humanity.

"What can we do fer ya?" Alex inquired in the Vernacular of the region. His question was met with silence. A tall, angular scowling fellow in bib overalls with the side unfastened, baring a white thigh, shirtless, wearing a tattered felt hat with a drooping brim, shoes without laces, with skin leathered by the sun and missing teeth, emerged from the truck. He walked around Alex, studying him from head to toe, saying not a word, he glanced briefly at Nora, nodded, climbed back into the truck, and turning it around, recrossed the creek, and disappeared, coughing and lurching up the sharply rising, rocky, wooded mountain side.

Nora and Alex looked at one another in disbelief and returned to the house in silence. It had been a long day, and they were both very tired as well as bewildered.

The next day began like any other day, chores in the morning, a hearty breakfast, Alex in the machine shed, repairing farm equipment, Nora cooking, cleaning, ironing, gardening, lunch, supper then utter exhaustion. Just before dark, that evening two cars entered the driveway. Nora stepped outside as two women emerged from the first car.

With them was an extremely thin, pale, shy little boy. The younger woman in a too tight blouse and skirt with a cigarette in one hand, taking the child by the arm pushed him toward Nora.

Neither woman spoke for several moments. Finally the older of the two said "They say yer man is the young'un's pa. Modding toward the younger woman, "Shes got herself a new man, and he don't want nothin' to do with her kid. She needs to be married off. We'uns got too many mouths to feed as tis, so we brung Joey to you'uns to take kir'of. If ye know what's good fer ye, ye'll keep yer mouth shut and act like he's your'n. Our men folks mean bizness, Them what's crossed em has been knowed to plumb disappear - ain't heer'd from no more.

The little boy began to cry and back away from Nora as the women returned to the car. Both vehicles backed down the drive and left in a cloud of dust. Nora, dumbstruck, stood for a moment trying to make sense of this incident, and its connection to the previous encounter with the truckload of mountain folk. She picked up a battered little suitcase held together with a bit of rope, took the distraught little fellow by the hand and led him to the porch. Opening the screen door they entered the living room where Alex sat listening to Gabriel Heater on the radio with a newspaper on his lap. Not looking up, he asked "what was all the commotion?" Nora did not answer, but stepped aside, where upon the child, immediately recognizing Alex, ran to him, throwing his arms around his neck. Sobbing, "Oh Papa he cried. Alex had a look of bewilderment as Joey continued to cling to him. He patted him gently. Overcome with a flood of emotion, Nora turned and ran upstairs to the bedroom and closed the door.

Sitting on the bed in the dark, she couldn't even cry. What was she to think? Had the husband she had loved and trusted since they were children together deceived her? For how long? When? where? She felt humiliated and betrayed. Clandestinity with this tawdry trollop? while their bucolic daily lives proceeded as if nothing was out of the ordinary. Her feelings of despair, rage, fear, sadness and disgust chased one another, unending.

After what seemed like hours, but actually less than a few minutes, a soft knock on the bedroom door put a halt to the tormenting thoughts. "Can I come in?" asked Alex. "Sure, why not," she answered sarcastically. "So— you're that youngun's daddy?" "No, but I wish I was." "Then what's he doin' here?" The conversation continued. "His folks must have planned it. Do you wanta hear my side of the story or not?" "Go ahead." He sat down beside her on the bed. "This Spring when I was workin' in the field down by the crick, gettin' ready to put in the corn crop, I stopped to eat dinner under that big old cottonwood. I heerd somethin' behind me on t'other side of the crick and turned to see what 'twas. This little guy was playin' by himself and hummin' a little tune. He looked up and seen me and I waved to him. The next thing I knew, he had crossed the crick over the low water bridge and there he was standin' in front of me, this skinny, smilin' little ol' barefoot boy with uncombed hair and a dirty face. I gave him half of my peanut butter and jelly sandwich, and he wolfed it down; same with the milk from my thermos. Every day while I was workin' in the field he would show up about the same time. Remember, I asked you to put a little more in my lunch pail? I'm sure you thought I was a mite hungrier 'cause of workin' hard."



He didn't say a word for a long time, then one day, out of the blue, he called me Papa. I don't mind tellin' you, I liked it. He told me his name was Joey. Poor little feller, he was real timid like, and it took a lot of doin' not to run away when he seen me. Maybe just seein' somethin' to eat made him cross the crick. I had no idee who his folks was or whar he come from. Figured they must be mountain folks not too fer away. When that old truck come down here t'other night and that feller acted so funny I was afeared it had somethin' to do with the youngun and they mighta thought I'd hurt him in some way or t'other. They musta hit on this here idee after they found out whar he war goin' ever day.

There was no doubt in Nora's mind that his story was true. She was sorry for ever doubting this good, kind man. His honesty and compassion were part of the very fiber of which he was made, "Well, what're we gonna do about it?" she asked aloud. Answering her own question, she stood up and said "first let's go down to the kitchen and have some milk and apple pie. You go fetch Joey. He must be scared down there by himself." "Oh, I didn't leave him down there" Alex said. "He's just outside in the hallway."

After the kitchen table meeting, where many weighty problems had been met head on and dispelled over the years, Joey was put to bed in the little room upstairs. After making sure he was asleep, but being unable to sleep themselves, they made plans for the next day.

First thing the next morning, Alex drove into town to meet with a family friend, an attorney to whom he told his dilemma. Returning home, he picked up Nora and little Joey and headed across the creek and up the mountain. Being unfamiliar with the terrain, they chose to take the horse and wagon instead of the old pickup. The little child didn't know his last name, but he could direct them to his home. After a few twists and turns, he exclaimed excitedly "there it is, there's Grandma and Grandpa's house!" A tumble down dwelling appeared in the distance. Squawking bare rumped chickens scattered in all directions and blue tick hounds bayed at their approach. A curious mule peered over the excuse for a fence. As they pulled up in front of the house, a torn screen door opened and a bent, tottery old man with his lower lip packed with snuff, and leaning on a cane, stepped out on the rickety porch. Behind him in the doorway stood a gaunt, white haired woman with a clay pipe in the corner of her mouth. Both were recognized as passengers of the previously encountered truck.

Alex approached the gate that hung by one hinge. "We're the Armstrongs, and we come about Joey," he said with conviction. The old man motioned with his cane to come forward. Alex explained again, this time louder as the old man obviously had trouble hearing.

Joey followed, running to his grandmother with outstretched arms. Patting the little boy on the head, she then pushed him away. From the wagon, Nora observed all this in sadness and disbelief.



Me and Nora will be glad to take him, if that's still what y'all want, but it has to be done legal like in our name said Alex. "We'll have lawyer McMillan draw up the papers for his ma to sign" From behind the door where she had been listening, Joey's mother appeared intentionally ignoring the boys eagerness to embrace her. Nora could stand it no longer. She exited the wagon, walked quickly to the porch, and taking the boy by the hand, gently led him away.

Alex continued emphatically "we've spoken to the lawyer and we'll meet you in town at ten o'clock in his office tomorrow morning. Heres the address" he said, handing her the attorney's card. If you want this over and done with, be there, and bring proof he's yourn. McMillan says if theres no birth certificate writin in a family Bible, or a witness that'll swear will do.

And so it was, Joey became Joey Armstrong. He missed his family for a while, but he had loved Alex from the first time he shared his lunch beneath the old cottonwood, and he grew to love Nora more each day. Gradually the earliest childhood memories faded away and he was content in his new home with his own room, so long empty, that had once belonged to another lad named Alex Junior who died tragically at about the same age he was now. He grew into a handsome young man. Alex and Nora made sure he recieved the education that circumstances had denied them both, and he never again hungered for anything — especially Love.

Because — Joey crossed the low-water bridge.



HIS story came to me in a dream
in the winter of 2018.

It was so detailed and so rare
for me to remember, I told my
daughter Tara about it. She
suggested that I write it down.

So here it is; to quote

James Mackintosh (1768-1832)

"the frivolous work of polished idleness,"

embellished with remembrances of
my own childhood, and the friends and
neighbors of a little Illinois village in
the 1930's, population 350. I placed
the characters and events in Virginia
(because I could) I was one of those

"lucky ticket holders who proudly took
the gaudy landscape home to my mother, who
promptly gave it a place in the garage.

Later, I happened to observe it serving as
a patch on a hole in the back of the
neighbor's out house. — There really

was a "free show" on Saturday's summer
evenings — a farmer outside of town
brought his team of horses to plow
gardens every spring. The ice delivery
man's nickname was "Froggy". Life was good.

I'm unaware of this particular story
ever occurring, but many other felicitous
endings came about by the unselfish acts
of kindness by those known to me, not the
least of whom was my father,
William Hester.

Carolyn Lee Hester

(But wait, there's more) extra 3 and 4

A small collection of poems written over decades, and finally gathered from their resting places in various drawers and cubby holes.

THE RECLUSE - inspired by the memory of my 4th grade teacher, whose lovely face was always melancholy in expression. Her young husband never recovered after being gassed in World War II. Miss Ann gave me a little book entitled *Along Nature's Highway*. I still have it.

THE AUCTION - My friend, Helen and I attended auctions every weekend, rain or shine for many years. At one particular sale I happened to notice a figure in the window. The expression on her face suddenly brought a sense of reality, until then unnoticed by me. That lady's story did not end with this scenario. I was one of those toads.

Miss Lulu - The candy bar I had put on the book shelf next to my first grade desk proved too much of a temptation. I thought - just one bite, she'll never know. In mid open mouth, she turned from the black board, and asked "you hungry, Sue?" well, come up here and we'll all watch you enjoy your candy bar. I sat on that little red chair and choked on every bite, as the kids all snickered - Lesson learned.

Spring Comes to Shanghai Road - Each year the magnificent carpet of blue eyed marys is too beautiful to describe.

Lad - for every one who remembers their youth growing up on a farm - the sights, smells ^{and} love.

Vigilance - a requiem of sorts for our disappearing heritage. (All by me except the last one - by Jenny Joseph, because I like it) (page 25)

The Recluse

I wonder why she looks so sad,
As if she never ever had --- A happy day.
Perhaps - a lingering heart ache --- Ages past.
She's almost always in her yard... When we go by
I try so hard to catch her eye.
I'll bet that I could make her smile
If I could stop and talk awhile -- But seems like
That will never be, Because the only time I see
Her from my window on the bus, when on the way to
And from school, --- When others taunt
With words so cruel _____
My father says "remember all your days --
There - but for the grace of God, go I.
Put yourself in others' place, and heed
The Rule of Gold -- Always."
Today I brought a lilac sprig from Mother's
Garden -- Not so big, just small enough to fit
Through the open window slit -- and as we
Passed, gave it a toss --- to where she stood.
On steps of moss -- As I looked back,
Her smile met mine -- Then, every day 'til school
Did end, We smiled and waved. Friend to Friend.
I think that I shall long remember
The days beginning that September,
That six year old so long ago,
And one whose name I did not know.



Carolyn Sue Hulsey

Began Feb 1979 - Finished Feb 2014

THE AUCTION

They held Aunt Mary's sale today
Relatives gathered from miles away
Nieces and nephews, with and kin
All awaiting the fun to begin.

The wagons were heavy with china
and glass
And, lovingly fashioned when but a young
lass

Embroidery and linens, some plain and some
grand

The quilts and samplers by Mary's own hand.

"What am I bid?" the auctioneer cried
For this Tiffany lamp, the old lady's pride;
A gas mask and helmet from World War I.
What'll you give for the old soldier's gun?"

A life time of memories spread out on the
lawn.

Sold as the auctioneer droned on and on
The four poster bed and the marble top chest
Wedding presents of old, now gone with
the rest.

By the crowd unaware in its zeal to possess,
Through the living room window, now curtainless
Sat a shawl covered figure with crest fallen
gaze —

As armloads of treasures from happier
days —



Auction - could

were carried away by oblivious toads
Unaware that a similar fate down the road
awaited them all, as days sped into years
When their lives as well, held no more tears.

With a chill in the air at the end of the day
And the last precious item was carried away.
A few empty boxes remained on the floor
of the house, dark and silent, padlock on the door.

Down the long drive lined with towering trees,
All planted by Mary, long ago, on her knees,
A shiny black car, its way slowly wending
With logo proclaiming 'Lifes Happy Ending.'

*(Like a play with a choice of an alternate ending,
Let's try this one instead, not quite so heart rending.)*

As the limousine rounded the bend of the lane
Mary discarded her shawl and her cane.
The driver, a sweetheart of long ages past
Out the window, his chauffers cap likewise he cast

They found one another in a twist of fate
Which proves to us all, it's never too late.
He turned out to be the auctioneer's friend
(Wouldn't O'Henry approve of this end?)

2016 Carolyn Sue Hulsey

Miss Lulu Owens

There's the bell, school day is done
We leave the classroom one by one

Orderly in single file

Seems to make our teacher smile

Our first day we learned this rule

Miss Lulu's word was law at school.

To take one step outside the door

This rite must be observed before.

We all in rapt attention stood

While big kids passed by (cause they could.)

Bursting through the double door
to greet what Nature had in store

Meanwhile -----

Miss Lulu with her auburn hair

Attends first graders in her care

Down the line from left to right

Buttons every coat up tight

In case galoshes buckles might

Not be secure, checks all, in spite

Of all that bending over, No surprise to all

who know her.

Nose, Reassessing

Finally we're allowed

to face the
drifts of

Wiping every needful

all the clothes

to go

daunting
snow.



Alma, Ill Grade School

Miss Lulu cont'd.

And that was 1991

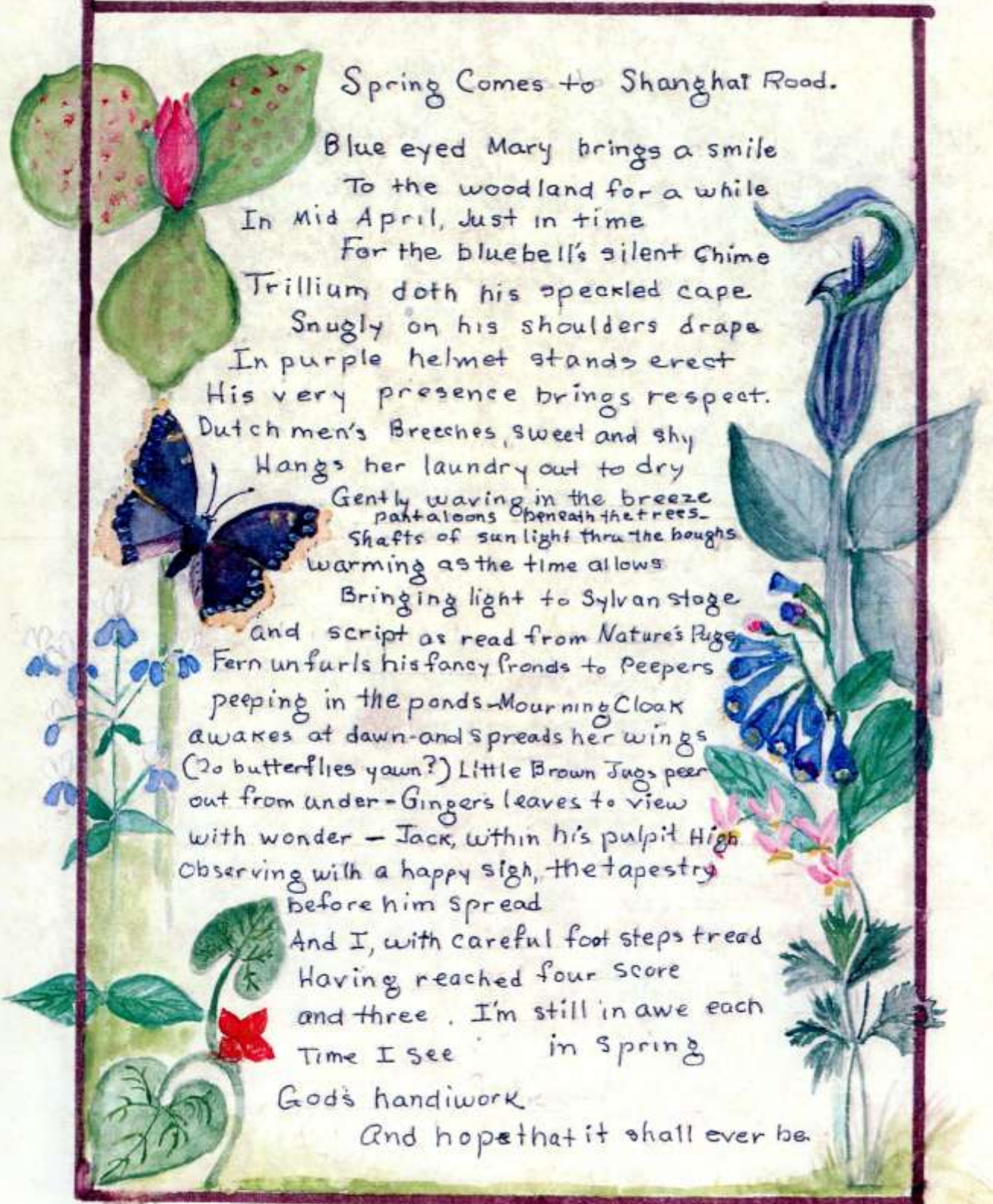
Miss Lulu, thanks for all you've done
for us when we were very small
Miss Kathryn, Ann, and Jackson, too
Those dedicated teachers who
Prepared for us the paths that led
Into the world that lay ahead
Each with a box of shining tools
A complete set of lifetime rules
In memory you remain among
That list of heroes gone unsung
Who helped to shape the minds so young

To whom it may concern: Thank you for
reading this far. If you're not a member of my
family who feels an obligation to humor me,
I confess to being responsible for these pages.
(this one had extra space)

Carolyn Sue Hulsey

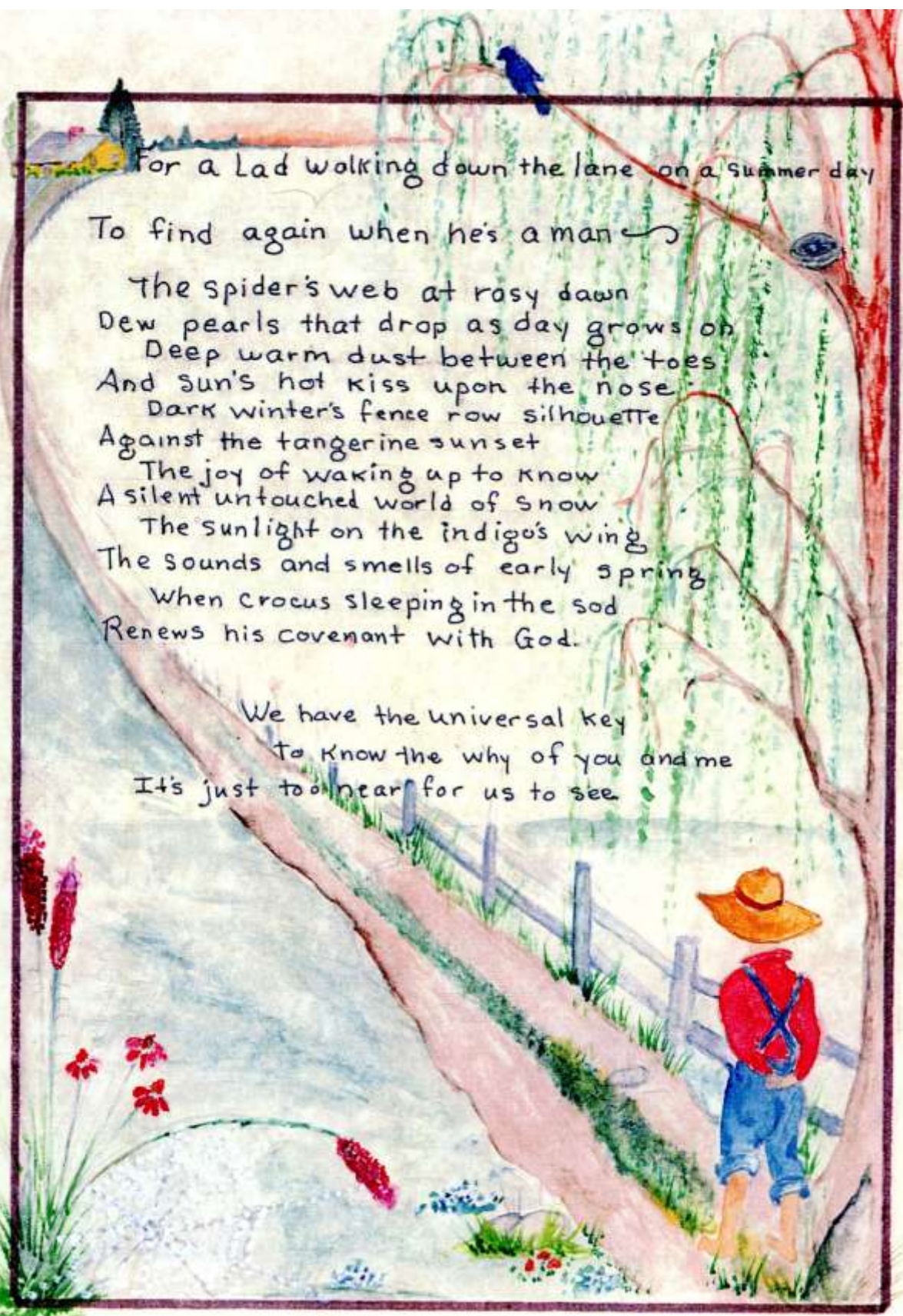
Born October 9 - 1934

Died - not yet - Spring, 2018



Spring Comes to Shanghai Road.

Blue eyed Mary brings a smile
To the woodland for a while
In mid April, just in time
For the bluebell's silent chime
Trillium doth his speckled cape
Snugly on his shoulders drape
In purple helmet stands erect
His very presence brings respect.
Dutch men's Breeches, sweet and shy
Hangs her laundry out to dry
Gently waving in the breeze
^{pantaloons} ^{beneath the trees.}
Shafts of sun light thru the boughs
Warming as the time allows
Bringing light to Sylvan stage
and script as read from Nature's Page
Fern unfurls his fancy fronds to Peepers
peeping in the ponds - Mourning Cloak
awakes at dawn and spreads her wings
(Do butterflies yawn?) Little Brown Jugs peer
out from under - Gingers leaves to view
with wonder - Jack, within his pulpit High
Observing with a happy sigh, the tapestry
before him spread
And I, with careful foot steps tread
Having reached four score
and three . I'm still in awe each
Time I see in Spring
God's handiwork
And hope that it shall ever be.



For a Lad walking down the lane on a summer day

To find again when he's a man

The spider's web at rosy dawn
Dew pearls that drop as day grows on
Deep warm dust between the toes
And sun's hot kiss upon the nose
Dark winter's fence row silhouette
Against the tangerine sunset

The joy of waking up to know
A silent untouched world of snow
The sunlight on the indigo's wing
The sounds and smells of early spring
When crocus sleeping in the sod
Renews his covenant with God.

We have the universal key
To know the why of you and me
It's just too near for us to see

VIGILANCE

There is a quiet beauty in old barns,
Leaning, sagging, sighing from winds
Of countless winters, and years of summer storms
Silent prairie sentinels watch alone
In faded cloaks of red or velvet gray,
With tattered tricornes flapping in rusty disarray;
The sounds of battle long since stilled
And troops all dead or gone.
A haven still for swallows and their young,
And Owl, a pompous prelate on his penthouse beam.
The barn — its heart worn satin smooth
By hoof and hide and hand — remains
An audience for Larksong
yet unsung.



Old Doolen Barn

C.S.H.

