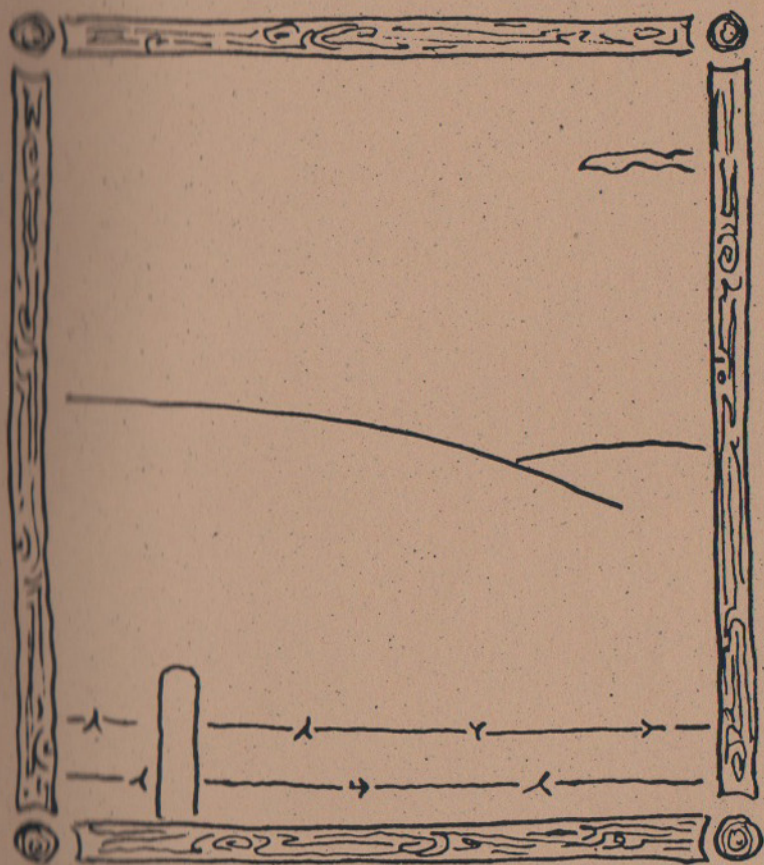


# AND SO IT WAS

(poems for my father)



BY JEAN JORGENSEN



"I could go on and on  
from memories at three  
to memories immediate.  
But from them all  
how do you choose  
which to leave  
which to choose—"

*From "Memory" by Miriam Mandel;  
Lions at Her Face - 1973*





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*Jean Jorgensen*

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*This book is dedicated to:*

**my brothers and sister—**  
who all have their own memories;

**Richard—**  
for his constant support and encouragement;

**and Brian—**  
for artwork, layout, and printing.





this north country  
now so scenic and fertile—  
fifty years ago  
Lord... the swamp and bush you'd plough through  
just to reach some higher ground

a newborn's first cries  
on a warm October night—  
in the hayloft  
her father's shining eyes  
as the threshing crew cheers

in a small hamlet  
first carnival sets up  
beside the old church—  
farmers light up and watch  
while children marvel at it all

---



children cower  
as their father rages—  
later... wide-eyed  
they obey their tearful mother  
and “kiss daddy goodnight”

hometown dance—  
in the basement bathroom  
dad's girlfriend  
puts on her lipstick gazing  
at me in a chipped mirror



dizzying bounce  
of flies against the window—  
okay in my room  
if I lose myself in books,  
daydreams... prayers

so many changes  
since I spent my younger days  
at this old pond—  
now I wish for any sound  
except this profound silence

---

Valentine's Day—  
my mother... heartbroken  
finds the courage  
(after 35 years)  
to pack up and leave

woods of my childhood  
nature has sent wild winds  
spinning through your midst—  
today all that is left  
is a jagged game of "Pick-Up Sticks"



first of March  
dad's pile of cut wood  
home to so many mice—  
his house now a home  
to no one but him

a short first visit  
with my aging father—  
unlike the setting sun  
I do not know  
when I will come again

---



how closely  
my brother and his new wife dance—  
how far apart  
our parents sit  
since their divorce

trees turning gold  
after 20 years we gather 'round  
a campfire  
off the lake... a cool wind  
as mom stands with her back to the flames

years now  
since my parents' day in court—  
still... today,  
the child in me trying  
to rid itself of old pain

this year might have been  
fifty years of marriage—  
if only my father  
had been raised with love  
he would not have ruled by fear

---



my father  
so filled with tears about the past—  
God forbid  
should someone see him cry  
like “sentimental old women”

no gift  
under his small tree—  
embraced by moonlight  
the old farmer goes out  
and feeds the cats



diabetic gentleman  
with partial vision in one eye  
reassures himself—  
“It won’t hurt to have  
just a little more jam....”

infrequent visit  
to her father’s house—  
barn kitten  
in for the first time also explores  
the kitchen... cautiously

---

once more  
I am called to your bedside  
as I leave  
some of your grief fills my eyes  
falls free in the bitter wind

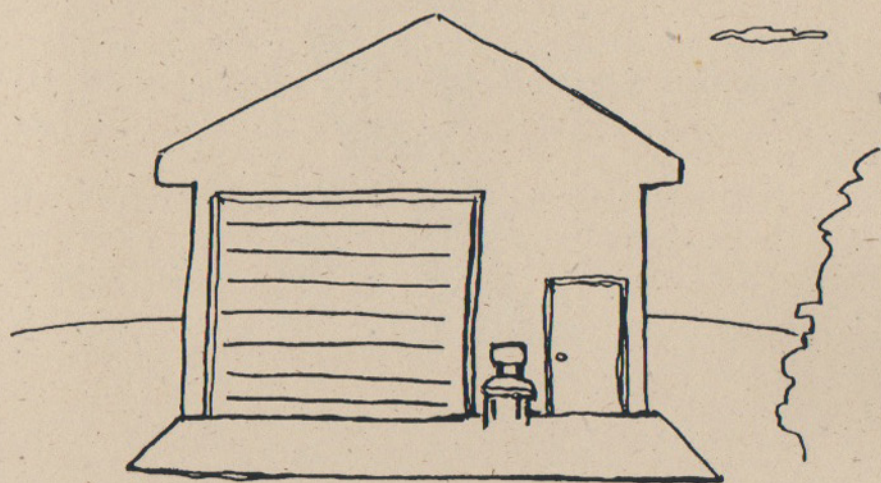
September morning  
through a blur of tears—  
my reclusive father  
never so alone as now  
in his coffin



such mourning  
for a princess and a nun—  
but oh... so much more  
the heartache I feel for this man  
I called my father... my dad

poems for my father  
I offer up a prayer  
this thanksgiving—  
at 55 years... old enough to know  
with forgiveness comes peace







**Jean Jorgensen**  
photo by Carole Aippersbach



*These tanka poems* have been presented in the order and style they were written, representing my feelings at the time. Many, though published, are just too personal to include here.

*I was told* many years ago "Write what you know about," and so I do. Though I follow and am inspired by the Japanese origin and form of my poetry, over the years, my work has taken on its own voice— the words their own patina.

*This is true*, I think, for anyone whose mistress is writing in any of its forms. Two lifetimes would not be enough to write "all that I know about." I am grateful for the one I have been given:

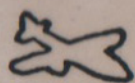
*Jean Jorgensen, October, 1998*

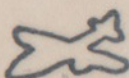
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(Tanka Splendor), The Tanka Journal, Haiku Canada  
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