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A Steadying Force Jerome C. Harste

*On Monday
she did the washing.
Most evenings
she did the milking,
The chickens and garden
were hers alone.*

*Evenings she made supper,
knitted socks,
and make sure the kids
did their homework.
She always had dreamed
of being a teacher.*

*On Tuesday
she did the baking.
Five loaves of bread,
plus kolatches,
a pan of cinnamon rolls,
and a pie, of course.*

*On Wednesday
she cleaned the house.
Lord, everything got dusty
in just one week.
Wednesday evening
was choir practice.*



*Ladies Aid
on Thursday forenoon.
On Thursday afternoon
she sewed,
making good use
of those printed flour sacks.*

*On Friday,
baths all around.
She had a standing appointment
at the beauty parlor.
Just a wash and set.
Her one indulgence.*

*On Saturday
she did what little shopping
her egg money could buy.
Sugar, flour, lard.
Horehounds.
You know, the necessities.*

*On Sunday
she prepared a pot roast,
timed to be done
when church was over.
After devotions,
she led the family in saying Grace.*

*This was Hannah's lot in life.
Two axe handles wide in the hips.
Beautiful.
A little preachy perhaps,
But a steadying force.*

Man Talk

Jerome C. Harste

On rainy days we men gathered
in the tool shed to talk,
sitting on sawed off sections of felled trees
made into stools and work benches
of various sizes.

Sometimes we sorted nuts and bolts
or straightened things up;
but mostly we helped my brother
Loren
forge some new invention;
as simple as a bale hook;
as complex as a new drag,
his welding talents renown.

The talk was gruff and raucous;
a liar's club,
complete with bursts of language

and an edge.



I never sat or stood too close to my father
on these occasions,
although I did learn to listen
to what the men were saying,
and how real men said things,
smoking their Camels
and wishing someday
I could join in.



Jerome C. Harste is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Culture, Literacy, and Language Education at Indiana University. Prior to his retirement in 2006 he served as president of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the National Reading Conference (now the Literacy Research Association), The National Conference on Language & Literacy, and the Whole Language Umbrella. Since retiring from IU, he has had time to develop his artistic skills. His watercolors have been featured on book covers and in *Language Arts*, *JoLLE*, *California English*, and juried into several national watercolor exhibits. He holds "Signature Status" in the Bloomington Watercolor Society and the Missouri Watercolor Society and can be reached at jerry.harste@gmail.com.