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Crosscut Sawing/Grandpa's High School Class Photo/Editorial Statement

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Crosscut Sawing

*Grady carried Pa's crosscut saw
over his shoulder like the chickensnake
I once saw him bring up the road.
He was nonchalant; it was long and dead,
thank goodness for that. The saw*

*was six feet of double teeth and stinging
nicks for six year old knees and fingers.
It cut through one-foot logs of yellow pine
with an easy motion.*

*Oak, and light'ard knots, made it sing.
Grady would spell me in the heat.
Then I'd wet the steel where it disappeared
into the cut, slapping on the coal oil
from the Nehi bottle stoppered with a brush
of green pine straw.*

*Lightning struck a pine behind the field,
marked it for death with a seam up the bark
precise as the bloodless line Grady drew
to open up a pig, or the crack
around a watermelon lightly dropped
to separate the whole and seedless heart.
We cut the pine, soaked it in creosote
(I walked to State Line every morning, watched
our log floating with fence posts
and beams for the new Chicora school house),
and built the barn with new tin around it.*

*Mice climb that tree now. I found
the saw by accident, hanging by Pa's handle
among spider webs and ancient corn shucks.
There was a deed on file, and rusted tin,
and in the sun a slightly oily feel
when I touched the blade, felt the points--
six feet of double teeth
and countless days between them.*

--H. M. Spottswood

Grandpa's High School Class Photo

*All day I've been studying these faces,
hunched like a jeweler over his stones.
The eyes hold the answers.
I chisel at blank stares,
try to break into their depths,
but in eyes which never blink,
there are only frozen ponds,
silent and dark.*

*Perhaps the lips will tell;
the way they come together,
drift apart,
wrinkle at the corners.
These lines are the threads
which bind their seams.
I tug but each face remains fixed
like a snag on a sweater sleeve.*

*In the last row, second from the right,
a girl looks out,
her arm draped around the shoulder of her classmate.
It is these which reveal us;
an arm around a shoulder,
a hand inside another,
the crossings we make
before moving on.*

--Jane Schapiro

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We want to promote the value of thoughtful observation as an educational method, of description as a technique for understanding, and of lived experience as a source of knowledge.

Accordingly, we are receptive to essays and commentary grounded in observed experience, to parts of reflective journals, to situation-centered descriptions of teaching/learning practice, to experience-oriented research, to case-studies and, occasionally, to the genres of poetry and fiction.

We want to define teaching and learning as broadly as possible and invite our contributors to stretch or dissolve traditional categories of education. We invite contributors from any relevant work area including teachers, students, parents, administrators, researchers, historians, philosophers, artists, human-service professionals and social scientists.

We prefer a style of intelligent informality to the jargon of any trade or to breezy generalities. Manuscripts should be typed, double-spaced, on one side of paper and sent with a self-addressed stamped envelope for return of the manuscript. Notes and references should follow the American Psychological Association (APA) style, but we offer editorial assistance regarding final form. Contributors will receive two complimentary copies of the issue in which their work appears.

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