

Writers one flight up

Sponsored by One Flight UP



The Heartland

By Susan Jaillet

winner of
Flights of Fantasy
Prose & Poetry Competition

I'm from the Heartland.

I'm from the city Sandburg called hog butcher of the world.

I'm from the rich, black, loamy soil along the 39th parallel,
the path of the transcontinental arc across America,
the line the last glacier left as it receded
as majestically and mysteriously as it appeared.

I'm from the steel and grease and bearings of oil wells that toiled,
day and night, summer and winter,
pumping crude oil from the ground.

I'm from the blood of horse traders, bootleggers,
blacksmiths, ferrymen, and farmers.

I'm from the railroad, the countless miles of track
lubricated with the sweat and blood of everyone's
father, uncle, brother, grandfather
as it inched tie by tie across the plains.

I'm from the apron strings of mothers and grandmothers
who did what had to be done to survive
and keep their children alive.

I'm from the community of stoic, hardy souls
coming together once a year with their green beans,
their corn, their tomatoes, to simmer chowder
a day and a night in huge iron kettles
beneath the maple trees.

I'm from the Ball jars stored in my grandpa's garage,
dusty and unused for a season because the drought
had dried the soil and parched every living thing
trying to make a life in it.

I'm from the flat farm land that a hundred years earlier
didn't know whether its heart was Blue or Grey.

I'm from the Land of Lincoln where only Blue
was taught in our school's version of history.

I'm from the neighborhoods where Italians lived
next to Poles in brick walkups,
their rich languages filled my ears.

I'm from the ground floor apartment next to the
holy-roller church where black voices sang and
praised so loud that my dad would
bang on the wall with a shoe and yell,
but they never stopped.

I'm from the halls of Bennett School where I learned
I was smart and there was so much more to the world
than what I had seen.

I'm from the gold and grey uniforms of our superior
Greenwave marching band and the chalk that marked
the grids across the high school football field.

I'm from the corn fields, golden tassels waving in the wind,
and the beauty of crystalline rows of soybeans that left me
dazed one hot summer day.

I'm from the Heartland.

Writers One Flight Up Next Contest

WOFU announces a *Flash Fiction* contest. Submit your original prose of no more than 650 words, written to the prompt "FIRECRACKERS," on or before **Sunday, May 31, 2009**. All entries must be submitted electronically. The winner, selected by WOFU, will be published in the Summer 2009 issue of *Pulse the Magazine of Mount Dora, Eustis and Tavares*, which is distributed in July 2009. Check out our Web site at www.writersoneflightup.com for entry details - and get crackin'!

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