

Sesquicentennial Pioneer Commemoration Speech

Robert Reynolds

My grandpa Walker Reynolds was a pioneer, too, with a Brigham beard.
Mom says he loved pickles, and dancing music.
Last time we saw him, Grandma said, "It's time to hug goodbye,"
and all I could think is how Grandpa's
four mud-stained layers of clothes stank like malt
liquor, spit, and urine. He pushed and pulled a busted handcart,
packed with sacks of half-eaten burgers, Coors cans,
torn-out ads for bras, slot clubs, and strippers
who'd dance in your hotel—his promised land.
"A kiss for you," I, one time, heard him stutter, smoking butts with lipstick.
Grandma'd long since left Walker,
after losing that last chance to win.
The horse's name was Pépé.
"Mother, it was close," he shook his head, looked down,
then threw his hot dog at a brick wall.

Grandpa never got to Utah.
Didn't know a bed outside the blinking neon,
blinding sun, burning heat.
Just like Moses, he spent years making circles,
looking for a destination. We like to think it was Zion.
Don't tell me he won't make it.