

Out in the Shop: In Memory of Grandpa

Candace Kearl

The sun shines a triangle through the hazed glass
of the shop door, spotlighting the eternal snow of dust
falling and collecting, as if by magnetic force,
on drill bits, saw blades, and boxes of nails.

Shavings from wood you cut form tiny dunes now,
ebbing and flowing at the feet of sawhorses and other machinery.
The stacks of uncut lumber lie in wait and want of use;
their silence hammering as I sit and stare.

You worked here often amid the whirl of blades,
the whistle of a Glenn Miller tune, and sketches
scribbled in pencil and still taped onto the cupboard,
the nicks in the workdesk like hoofprints in frozen earth.

The wood, like you, is firm in its constitution, the nicks
and cuts worn down by sandpaper, course and fine.
Its honest aroma mixed with the memory of your sweat
enlivens the deeper grains: yellow pine, honey oak, pink cherry.

Such firm tenderness is found elsewhere in flesh of chokecherries,
Grandma's begonias, and quaking aspens.
Your "quakies," you called them when you counted them in the
yard,
though thin-skinned, show the muscle of wood beneath, like a
horse's flank.

Their leaves, like coins green on one side, silver on the other,
shake as with age,
like your hand when you attended to minute details:
sanding, pressing putty into nail holes, pulling stain along the
grain.
Your works stand strong, like ceremony: a chair for sitting, a bed
to sleep.