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## Keeping the Record

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# Keeping the Record

Lorna Van Gilst

Mother's basement fruitroom shelves  
    lined one tiled wall  
    from floor to ceiling  
With rows of mason jars  
Packed with windfalls from the orchard,  
Sealed in boiling water bath,  
Set out to cool on dish towels  
Till each individual jar  
Let out a little pop—  
    like a contented baby's burp—  
And metal sealing rings could be removed.

Thirty quarts of puckered crabs  
    skin-to-skin in sweet nectar;  
Twenty quarts of golden, slivered peaches—  
    purchased at Holub's Market  
    for too high a price—  
    gleaming now inside the glass;  
Seven precious quarts of dark red bings—  
    jewels from the West—  
    to be doled out on winter nights,  
        seven cherries to a bowl  
        in little pools of dark red juice  
        slurped from the dish when  
            Mother's eyes were turned away.

A dozen pints of concord jelly,  
    pure and clear,  
    the frothy bubbles skimmed off  
    till only the essence of grape remained.  
All carefully recorded in Mother's spiral canning book.

But on the middle fruitroom shelf, all the way across the room,  
    thirty-one gallon cans of applesauce—  
    Dad's railroad salvage bargain buy—  
    mere filler, packed in bulk  
    in opaque dented metal cans  
        earning a common place on the supper table,  
        but not a single line in Mother's canning book.